Multilingual Pedagogical Practices in Dialogic Teaching in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

Thilaga Ravinthar

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya

thilaga.r@fbk.upsi.edu.my

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5852-8324

Dr. Azlin Zaiti Zainal

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya

azlinzainal@um.edu.my

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0149-9742

Abstract

This research investigates the dialogic interactions occurring in ESL classrooms at a public university in Malaysia. Utilising Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Alexander's Dialogic teaching as frameworks, it delves into the interactions between instructors and students within a multilingual environment. Observations from the classroom and semi-structured interviews revealed that both instructors and students engage in code-switching and translanguaging, while instructors incorporate cultural references to support students' responses. Dialogic teaching emphasises knowledge building through cumulative dialogue, moving away from the traditional IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) model to empower students. The use of multilingual practices enhances students' dialogic engagement by offering linguistic flexibility and encouraging them to share their opinions. Classroom observations indicated that employing multilingual resources in dialogic teaching strategies led to increased participation, better knowledge construction and more inclusive student involvement. Instructors strategically incorporate cultural references and validate students' multilingual contributions to create psychologically safe spaces that encourage authentic participation, while students demonstrate agency in selecting linguistic resources that best express their ideas and cultural identities. This study contributes to applied linguistics research by demonstrating how multilingual pedagogical practices can effectively support Alexander's dialogic teaching principles in diverse ESL contexts, challenging monolingual ideologies that dominate traditional language education. The study provides valuable insights for ESL instructors aiming to foster more inclusive and culturally aware dialogic settings by utilising students' multilingual abilities as educational resources. It ultimately proposes that successful dialogic instruction in multilingual environments necessitates a fundamental shift in how language is perceived, moving from a deficit view to one that sees it as a resource, while still adhering to Alexander's essential focus on meaningful and engaging classroom discourses.

Keywords: dialogic interaction, multilingualism, group discourse, ESL pedagogy, Higher learning

Introduction

In Malaysia, the teaching of English as a second language (L2) requires educators to navigate a complex multilingual landscape that presents both unique challenges and pedagogical opportunities. As a nation where Malay Language serves as the official language and medium of instruction in most government schools, English occupies the position of a second language (L2) that students must master for academic and professional advancement. This linguistic complexity is further compounded by Malaysia's rich multicultural environment as students often speak additional languages such as Mandarin, Tamil, or various mother tongues (AlAfnan et al., 2025; How et al., 2015). The multicultural and multilingual setting in Malaysia demands innovative pedagogical approaches that recognise and strategically harness students' full range of linguistic resources rather than treating multilingualism as a challenge. In this setting, the interplay of languages often steer students to use code-switching

or translanguaging to express their ideas and traditionally it is often viewed as challenge in ESL classrooms (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014). However, these linguistic practise is often purposeful and context based in which the interlocutors aim to achieve a goal in a discourse (Huda et al., 2025).

The Higher Learning students bring their diverse linguistic repertoire which post challenges to monologic way of teaching English as it limits the opportunities for students to interact (Navaz, 2020; Sebastián & Villarroel-Henríquez, 2024). This has led to extensive research in the area of mastery of English among undergraduates which been extensively researched by scholars and the findings reveal that employers seek undergraduates who can communicate English intelligibly as it is a global language and competency would reflect the reputation of organisation and ability to engage in an active discourse at work (Zainuddin et al., 2019)

In language classrooms, some of the initiatives that have been implemented to enhance the speaking skill among undergraduates include the benchmarking of English to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) which requires instructors to move from the conventional Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) classroom and encourage students to engage in discourse. Based on this, it necessitates a fundamental pedagogical shift that positions students as active interlocutors rather than passive recipients which equip Malaysian graduates to essential skills such are critical thinking, relevance, real life skills and effective communication in this 21st century (Hossain et al., 2018; Tee et al., 2024).

In response to this challenge, dialogic teaching has emerged as a positive way for instructors to engage in reciprocal dialogues in which students are engaged in interaction to exchange information, discover issues, cross-examine ideas and tackles issues in a cooperative environment that is in support of the discourse (Gillies, 2014). Recent studies in dialogic teaching in Malaysian secondary schools revealed the perception of instructors about this approach in relation to pedagogical shift which highlighted that the use of open-ended questions affirmed students to be independent learners in the construction of understanding through exploratory talks (Ramasamy & Zainal, 2023). Another research by Yang & Brindley (2022) revealed the difficulty of initiating an interaction in the classroom and instructors employing strategic questioning techniques assist in encouraging students to participate in group discourse. This aligns with the Malaysian higher education blueprint of 2015 to 2025, which enshrines for Malaysians to attain proficiency in both the Malay and English languages. However, there is a lack of empirical studies on pedagogical innovations like dialogic teaching which can bridge the gap between policies and the realities in a second language classrooms at Higher learning institutions.

Research Questions

This study examines how instructors utilise multilingual resources to facilitate dialogic interactions in Malaysian ESL classrooms and explores how multilingual pedagogical practices shape student participation and knowledge construction in group discourse.

Dialogic Teaching as a Pedagogical Tool

Using talk as a tool for thinking is the central of dialogic teaching which is coined from Bakhtin's Dialogism and Sociocultural Constructivism of Vygotsky. Based on this, dialogic teaching posits collaboration between both the instructor and students in the meaning making process. It focusses on six principles which are (i) collective (students learn in collaborative nature), (ii) reciprocal (both instructors and students listen to each other),

(iii) supportive (safe space for students to express their idea), (iv) cumulative (building the idea together) and (v) purposeful (interacting for a specific goal) (R. Alexander, 2018a, 2020). The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky which focusses on Zone of Proximal Development relates how social interaction promotes the interlocutors to acquire language through interaction. Research indicates that learners gain the most when teaching and assistance are customized to their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), utilising methods like prompts, examples and group activities (Wass & Golding, 2014; Wei, 2024).

Both teacher-directed and peer-supported scaffolding contribute to language growth, particularly when learners collaborate to tackle language challenges collectively to express the idea (Muntasir & Akbar, 2023; Poehner & Lantolf, 2021). Through dialogic teaching, instructors provides support by targeted questions, simulations and promoting interactive classroom discourse (Donham & Andrews, 2023). However dialogic teaching is often misapprehended by students facing language difficulties as they are unable to have a sustained interaction in a group discourse. Some scholars have addressed this issues by advocating the implementation of dialogic teaching for multilingual learners to promote active participation in group discourse which enhance the knowledge construction and proficiency of the target language (Gibbons, 2018; Paudel, 2020; K. Qin et al., 2025). Researches have addressed dialogic teaching in various terms which are accountable talk (Michaels et al., 2008), productive talk (Resnick et al., 2015), learning talk (Juzwik et al., 2008) and dialogic education (Wegerif, 2019). However, dialogic teaching is distinctively different from the rest as it constitutes a systematic framework which is underpinned by the principles which harness the power of talk to stimulate thinking and comprehensive understanding through 61 indicators for planning and practice (R. Alexander, 2018b).

Instructors must acknowledge the notion that dialogue plays a crucial role in the process of learning and instructors play an active role through the types of questions posted during the discourse. Thus, instructors having the skill of organising the questions to progress the talk productively to achieve the learning goal is by embracing the principle of purposefulness as emphasised by Alexander (2018). The types of questions should be purposeful, (a) to test the learner's content comprehension, (b) stimulate learners to express their ideas, justifications and comprehension, (c) encourage the idea that learners can articulate for themselves and (d) create the environment for learners to engage in meaningful interaction (R. Alexander, 2018a, 2020; Gillies, 2014).

Some of the past studies involving the implementation of dialogic teaching in higher learning institutes revealed positive outcome in communicative skills among the undergraduates (Jocuns, 2021; Romios et al., 2024; Shaari et al., 2018). Meanwhile in Malaysia, the implementation of dialogic teaching in ESL classroom was initiated through the Oral Proficiency Scheme (OPS) project under Ministry of Education to empower weak learners in English classes (Ramasamy & Zainal, 2023).

Multilingualism in Second Language Classroom

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) centralised multilingual pedagogies in teaching the language but this is very much influenced by teacher's ideologies and practises (Burner & Carlsen, 2023a; Osidak et al., 2024). Infact, students language backgrounds are not prioritised as compared to language instructors' ideologies and it is very much motivated by national contexts (Burner & Carlsen, 2023b; Paudel, 2020). Recent studies in multilingualism and multiculturalism reveal that multilingualism serves in a positive manner for

teaching and learning of the language and this include translanguaging, code-switching in group discourse which promote a sustained interaction among students (Burner & Carlsen, 2023a; Jayadi et al., 2022; Osidak et al., 2024). In Malaysian classroom, the students learn Malay Language, English and mother tongues (L1) which pave way for linguistic diversity (Shan Shan & Binti Abdul Aziz, 2025; Yusof et al., 2021). Some of the approaches they employ in the classroom include code-switching and translanguaging which afford students to interact by integrating various language practices. In universities, Malaysian undergraduates believe that the usage of bilingualism and multilingualism assist with their language learning (Abdul Malek, 2024). Through this, students an leverage their diverse linguistic repertoires to enhance comprehension and facilitate more robust communicative exchanges within the academic environment (Hu & Zhang, 2024),

This dynamic interplay of languages fosters a more inclusive learning environment where students can bridge the gap between their L1 and L2 which leads to improved learning outcomes (Ramakarsinin et al., 2024). This approach moves beyond the traditional focus on target language proficiency by acknowledging and utilising students' full linguistic capabilities (Neokleous & Karpava, 2023). Some of the past studies in Malaysian ESL classroom revealed that code-switching is a common pedagogical practice, where instructors often alternate between English and Malay or other vernaculars to clarify concepts, manage the classroom or build rapport with students (Jogulu, 2024; Jumal et al., 2019; Mohamed Mokhtar et al., 2022). Thus, instructors affording students with linguistic flexibility in a group discourse is able to promote deeper engagement on the subject matter as students are able to use their linguistic resources to express complex ideas (Gibbons, 2018; Raki & Sulaiman, 2021). Through this integration of linguistic resources in an ESL classroom, the dynamics of the classroom transforms as students' entire cognitive and linguistic resources are leveraged, fostering knowledge construction and sociocultural understanding which assist in dialogic interaction (Phan Le Ha et al., 2024).

Integrating Dialogic Teaching and Multilingual Practices

Limited research has examined the intersection of dialogic teaching and multilingual pedagogies in higher learning and there is an unclear direction on the most effective approaches for integrating these pedagogies in multilingual university contexts . Creese and Blackledge (2010) suggest that multilingual classroom practices can enhance the dialogic nature of learning by providing students with greater linguistic flexibility to express complex ideas. Through the strategic use of code-switching and translanguaging, students can negotiate understanding, clarify perspectives and co-construct knowledge in ways that align closely with the principles of dialogic interaction.

Similarly, Rapanta (2016) argue that translanguaging practices can support the cumulative and purposeful dimensions of dialogic teaching by enabling students to build upon their existing knowledge bases. By allowing students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires, instructors can facilitate deeper engagement of the topic and promote a sustained interaction which encourages students to connect their prior knowledge with new information through cumulative and collective principle as conceptualised by Alexander (2008).

However, concerns remain about how multilingual practices might impact English language development goals in ESL contexts. This tension between multilingual inclusivity and target language focus represents a critical area for empirical investigation.

Research Design

This research utilised a qualitative case study approach rooted in constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. The constructivist perspective acknowledges that knowledge is formed through social interaction and dialogue which is consistent with the theoretical principles of dialogic teaching. The interpretivist viewpoint facilitated an investigation into how participants derive meaning from their experiences with dialogic pedagogy in real classroom settings (Vygotsky, 1978). The primary objective was to examine how language instructors utilised the multilingual resources to assist dialogic interactions and how these practices enhanced participation patterns and knowledge construction in classroom.

Research Context and Participants

A purposive sampling approach was employed to select three ESL instructors who had a minimum of five years of teaching experience. All of them had prior experience teaching EP4 courses, ensuring familiarity with the course context and objectives. The instructors represented diverse educational backgrounds, including Bachelor of Education in TESL, Master of Education in TESL, and Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics. The gender distribution of the instructor group consisted of two males and one female. Two classes for each instructor was chosen randomly for data collection since all of the classes had mixed level of proficiency students and they come from various multilingual background with a range of linguistic backgrounds including Malay, Chinese, Tamil and Iban which reflect the multilingual composition of the students. In each class, the number of students range from thirty to thirty five and these students are undergraduates students who learn English as their L2 since in primary.

Before the commencement of data collection, the participating language instructors underwent a two-day professional development workshop (12 hours in total) focused on dialogic teaching practices. The workshop was facilitated by an expert trainer from Malaysia's OPS-English project and was designed to strengthen instructors' pedagogical knowledge and skills related to dialogic teaching. The training content included key theoretical and practical components, such as Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk by Robin Alexander (2020), Opening Dialogue by Martin Nystrand (1997) and Interactional Competence framework by Richard F. Young (2008). The T-SEDA (Teacher Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis) toolkit was also introduced as an analytical tool to support classroom discourse analysis. Additionally, the workshop incorporated practical microteaching sessions and reflective activities, allowing instructors to apply dialogic principles in simulated teaching contexts and critically reflect on their pedagogical practices.

Data Collection Methods

The semester comprised 14 weeks of lectures, from which 4 weeks were selected for observation based on their focus on speaking and listening tasks. A Sony video camera was positioned at the rear of the classroom to record classroom discourse during group discourse presentations and field notes were taken to document classroom dynamics and interactions. The classroom observation checklist was adapted based on T-SEDA coding categories and instructors were interviewed using video-stimulated recall interview after each class to gain understanding and examine their perceptions on dialogic teaching and a semi-structured interview was conducted after all the data collection process to examine their views of dialogic teaching as an approach to facilitate group discourse. For the video-stimulated recall interview, the researcher adapted the recall questions from Nguyen (2013) which focussed on three questions after the viewing of the video clips by the instructors; which were what were you

thinking, what was the reason for doing this and why specifically this as well as why do you think this was utilised. Each session lasted from 20 to 30 minutes that was audio recorded using a voice recording feature of mobile phone and transcribed in a verbatim manner in prior to coding to allow systematic analysis of the data. The camera position for the data collection is placed at the end which is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Classroom Observation

For each classroom observation, the recording lasted from 1 hour to 1 hour fifteen minutes and this was conducted for all the three instructors in each of their classes. In total, the video recordings were 8 recordings for each instructor and 24 recordings for all the three of them. This resonates to O'Brien (1993) as he stressed the availability of data depends on the time of the resources. During this stage, students were assigned into groups and each group was given a theme and they had the autonomy to decide the topics based on the assigned theme. Each group was placed at least 2 metres away to minimise the noise interruptions and the focus group discourse was audio recorded to capture the dialogic exchange among the members which include questioning techniques, argumentations, speaking turns and linguistics choices utilised during the meaning making process to engage in a group discourse. After the focus group discourse, the instructor randomly selected a few groups to present their ideas and applied dialogic teaching principles in fostering interactive and collaborative classroom dialogue.

The following stage of data collection included semi-structured interviews with all the three instructors which ranged from 30 to 45 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed in prior to coding to explore their perceptions. All of the transcriptions were coded using Nvivo software using Braun and Clarke framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis

The interview and classroom observation data were transcribed in a verbatim manner and uploaded in Nvivo software for coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach, the transcripts were analysed using Alexander Dialogic Teaching Framework (2008) and Nystrand's Dialogically Organised Instruction (1997). Codes were developed deductively based on key theoretical constructs such as dialogic principles, linguistic repertoire, and meaning negotiation, while remaining open to emergent themes from the data.

Findings and Discussion

Strategic Use of Multilingual Resources for Dialogic Facilitation

The analysis revealed that instructors demonstrated sophisticated awareness of how multilingual practices could enhance dialogic interactions within the classroom. Contrary to traditional monolingual pedagogical approaches, instructors strategically employed multilingual resources as deliberate teaching tools to scaffold student understanding and foster participation. Rather than perceiving code-switching as a pedagogical shortcoming or deviation from best practice, instructors leveraged students' full linguistic repertoire to create more inclusive and productive dialogic spaces.

A prominent pattern emerged in which instructors frequently utilised Malay Language to clarify complex English concepts, particularly when observing signs of student confusion or hesitation to participate. This strategic code-switching functioned as a cognitive bridge, allowing students to access conceptual understanding before grappling with linguistic expression in English. One instructor articulated this approach explicitly, stating: "*I try to just for the sake of having them being able to generate ideas, we do it in Malay. Yes, you can see that this is not content issue. So, code switching happens as well*". To emancipate the silent students due to potential linguistic barrier, the instructors approached with a strategic multilingual support. The collective principle of dialogic teaching promoted both instructors and students to work together in the classroom discourse in a shared endeavour to build knowledge on the topic of discourse.

Classroom observations corroborated this finding, with multiple instances of instructors seamlessly alternating between languages during explanations. This code-switching typically followed a predictable pattern which is initial presentation of content in English, followed by Malay Language clarification when students' comprehension appeared uncertain and concluding with collaborative reconstruction of the concept in English. This cyclical approach not only facilitated immediate understanding but also modelled strategies students could employ in their own meaning-making processes.

Week 3_Class1_TA

139	S	Corruption..
140	T	**Okay, corruption.**
141		Corruption.
142		Good.Right, okay.
143		Corruption.
144		**Rasuah,...wahh jauhnya bunyi dia.**
145		corruption.

In this excerpt above, the instructor explained the word 'corruption' in Malay as a '*rasuah*' to ensure all the students in the class will be able to connect and understand the content of the discourse while learning a new vocabulary. In another class, the usage of code-switching was implemented get students to explain further to have a sustained interaction and teacher prompted by code-switching the instruction. The strategic use of code-switching has become a strategy in dialogic teaching to ensure fair access to classroom discourses and to promote inclusive dialogue. When the student mentioned the word "corruption" during the discourse, the teacher offered the Bahasa Malaysia equivalent, saying "*Rasuah,...wahh jauhnya bunyi dia*" (lines 144-145). This act of translanguaging

fulfilled several educational purposes at once. It acknowledged the student's input by confirming the correctness of the English term while also making sure the entire class understood (García & Wei, 2014) Instead of viewing the English word "corruption" as the only means for conceptual comprehension, the instructor acknowledged that providing semantic access through Bahasa Malaysia was essential for all students to engage meaningfully in future discourses.

Week 1_Class1_TB

78	T	Because of the surroundings, the impacts of the
79		connections, lack of morality because of the surroundings.
80		explain? **hmm the part to explain tu**.

This excerpt demonstrates several key aspects of how multilingual resources are strategically employed for dialogic facilitation. The instructor's code-switching from English to Malay at a critical juncture reveals a sophisticated use of their bilingual repertoire to manage the interaction and facilitate continued dialogue. The code switch that occurs when the instructor seeks clarification, "*hmm the part to explain tu*" Here, the Malay demonstrative "*tu*" (meaning "that") appears at the end of an otherwise English utterance. This is not random linguistic mixing but rather a strategic choice that serves multiple communicative functions. The use of "*tu*" creates linguistic intimacy and reduces the formality of what could otherwise be perceived as a direct challenge or admission of confusion (Goldstein, 1998; J. Qin, 2022).

Instead of maintaining monolingualism, which might increase cognitive load or create affective barriers, the instructor lowers the barriers by asking for help through switching to L1. The content words ("explain," "part") remain in English, maintaining the academic register, while the deictic marker "*tu*" introduces a conversational tone. This acknowledges the bilingual reality of the participants and utilise code-switching as a resource for meaning-making process in dialogic interaction.

This multilingual strategy promotes sustained interaction through building knowledge in a cumulative manner. The code-switch creates space for clarification without derailing the discourse's momentum. It demonstrates that multilingualism itself becomes a resource for negotiating understanding and interlocutors can strategically deploy elements from either language depending on the communicative function needed at that moment. This is particularly valuable in dialogic interaction where maintaining engagement while addressing comprehension gaps is essential (Yusof et al., 2021). The excerpt thus exemplifies how bilingual speakers don't simply alternate between two separate linguistic systems, but rather draw strategically from their full linguistic repertoire to facilitate dialogic interaction. This was answered by a student by contributing the discourse on the issue of kidnap "*When people have no money, they become desperate*". The teacher's natural translanguaging creates genuine communicative conditions supporting Bakhtin's notion of authentic dialogue which assist conversation flow.

Student Agency in Multilingual Expression

The classroom observation also demonstrated students selecting linguistic resources that assisted them in dialogic interactions. They actively negotiated meaning in the interaction through strategic use of the multilingual resources. Students employed translanguaging to convey nuanced ideas which was difficult for them to express

in English. This was acknowledged by the instructor C as he mentioned *'but what I can say is when they are forgetting some words, missing out words when they want to speak, they tend to either code switch or use Malay language'* to sustain the interaction. This shows that students have internalised that its sharing their ideas is much pivotal rather than having an accurate usage of language. The findings demonstrate that students have developed the translingual practise as they are able to navigate across linguistic codes to accomplish communicative goal (Canagarajah, 2011). Instead of perceiving code-switching as a shortcoming, students seemed to understand it as a resource which enhanced them to engage in classroom discourse. This metacognitive insight suggests that the classroom dynamics had effectively prioritised meaning-making as the main goal of interaction with in a dialogic interaction to sustain the development of topic in a supportive and cumulative principle.

Video recordings captured instances where students engaged in code-switching and translanguaging during group discourse seamlessly alternating between languages to build upon each other's ideas. This linguistic strategy appeared in an authentic manner which allows the discourse to be sustained among the interlocutors in the group. These students also assisted each other by providing clarification and elaborations which promoted dialogic interaction in a collective and cumulative manner. For instance, in one of the of the group discourse, student while discussing on the nature of AI algorithms, the student code-switched the word 'kaput' to retain her turn in the discourse and to convey the meaning of spoilt or broken in Malay language.

Week 4_Class1_TA

216	AI algorithm itself can adapt to the different difficulties or difficulties
217	based on challenges by based on individual progress. So, as we know, the AI like
218	**A kaput** or anything else that we know, it's like kind of interesting when..

This example illustrates how code-switching in a dialogic interaction can promote continuous engagement by allowing students to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to express intricate ideas in a multilingual academic setting. The language instructor's decision not to interrupt, thereby fostering an environment where students can independently navigate their linguistic exchanges, suggests that these instructors are emphasising fluency over accuracy, a priority they have highlighted in their interviews and it also uphold the principle of supportive as emphasised in Alexander's (2008) teaching framework. In promoting dialogic interaction among the students, instructors recognised and supported students' natural code-switching, considering it a beneficial tool for sustaining dialogic flow and expressing culturally nuanced meanings through Malay discourse markers like "la" and "ini," as well as culturally specific terms such as "simpanan" (affair) and "Bapa Kemerdekaan," (Father of independence) which do not have direct English equivalents that reflect its authentic meaning in the context. In another class, student employed translanguaging to emphasise points and assist in clarification of meaning in a discourse. This include switching to Malay to provide culturally specific term which enhances the understanding.

Week 2_Class1_TC

198	My husband, first wife happiness stealer
199	So, from what I see of this polygamy as a second wife,
200	there is nothing good happening in this marriage.
201	**Because, being a second wife is like, in Malay, we call it simpanan.**
202	You guys know?
203	And I'm used to it.

The student utilised translanguaging to express a culturally nuanced perspective on polygamy. Primarily communicating in English the student incorporated the Malay "*simpanan*" (line 201), which carries a culturally significant meaning that might not be fully captured fully in English. This switch enhances understanding which taps into shared cultural knowledge. The student followed with a comprehension check "You guys know?", encouraging peer interaction that supports cumulative knowledge building. This kind of multilingual integration demonstrates how peer supported dialogue in a dialogic classroom can validate students' complete linguistic abilities, promoting inclusivity and the construction of meaning across different languages. The instructors also acknowledged the students use of L1 through code-switching to express their ideas especially in instances where they struggle to find the accurate word in the context. This was acknowledged by all the instructors but they also stressed the minimal use of code-switching helps to promote dialogic interaction and over use of it affects the fluidity of the dialogic facilitation.

Enhanced Participation and Inclusive Classroom Environment

The incorporation of multilingual practices alongside with dialogic teaching yield positive changes in classroom dynamics, particularly in students participation and engagement during the discourse. Instructors acknowledged that with the multilingual integration, students demonstrated active participation and this even assisted students who have been silent in class. During the interview, one of the instructor employed an activity known as 'parlimen bawang' which translates to gossips in Malay language. In this start up activity, students used translanguaging and code-switching which increased their willingness to participate in the group discourse. Instructor A mentioned that "*When you ask then to use full English language, there is limitation and when I did not set, okay you have to use full English language, you can see that they are really into the discourse*". Instructor A's observations offer a crucial understanding of how language policy affects student participation in classroom discourses. The instructor mentioned a direct cause and effect relationship upon enforcing English only rules which limits students participation.

Her approach of lifting this restriction leads to students being "really into the discourse." This indicates that monolingual language policies create unnecessary obstacles that hinder the authentic dialogic interaction of multilingual learners. The "limitation" Instructor A refers to is not just about language constraints but also about restricting participation. When students are required to use "full English language," they face a dual cognitive challenge as they process complex content while also managing their language use to stay within the set linguistic limits. This increased cognitive load shifts mental resources away from truly engaging with ideas and towards self-monitoring their language (Babazade, 2025; Campbell et al., 2007)

This leads to students opting for silence over the risk of code-switching or making mistakes during the interaction. During dialogic interaction, it leads to fewer contributions, shorter responses and a reluctance to engage in longer

exchanges which affects the knowledge construction in a cumulative manner as emphasised by Alexander (2008. Thus when Instructor A lifts the English only rule, the change in participation is remarkable. Students become "really into the discourse," indicating a move from constrained compliance to genuine engagement. This phrase reflects improved participation as students became willing to engage in discourse as they could supplement with other languages if needed. At this juncture, the students can focus on critical thinking and knowledge building in a collaborative manner as they are empowered to express the idea as knowledge should not be evaluated based on the competency level (Cummins, 2000; Robillos et al., 2023). This encourages meaningful participation which promoted students to take an active role in the discourse and steer the interaction rather than simply adhering to the controlled language settings in the classroom.

In this classroom excerpt, it was demonstrated that the use of code switching in small group discourse enhanced the participation of students as they feel less anxious which helps them to convey ideas extensively when faced with language barriers (Candilas et al., 2023).

TA_FG1

Speaker 2 : Or you want to continue to agree with us? Power of small steps. Power of small steps.

Speaker 1 : The challenge is... Solution? No, no.

Speaker 1 : The challenge is when we... **Malas lagi? Apa malas lagi***?*

*Speaker 1 : Ah***, lazy. When we lazy... Yeah, it's not easy***.*

Speaker 1 : Taking too much time. Taking too much time. So, what topic?

Speaker 1 : Dengar? Dengar deh. Abis lah.

Speaker 3 : It's easy to elaborate. I think it's close to us as a student. Right.

In this excerpt, Speaker 1's code-switching in the phrase "The challenge is when we... Malas lagi? Apa malas lagi?" highlights the use of their first language (L1) for cognitive processing and word retrieval. The pause indicated by "when we..." followed by the switch to Malay "Malas lagi? Apa malas lagi?" illustrates how multilingual individuals utilise their entire linguistic range when facing temporary processing challenges in their second language (Hou et al., 2024).

The repeated questioning "Malas lagi? Apa malas lagi?" indicates an active search for the right conceptual framework, employing the L1 as a cognitive support. The correction "Ah, lazy. When we lazy... Yeah, it's not easy" shows advanced metalinguistic awareness and strategic code-switching to sustain the interaction among the students. This shows that code-switching as a sophisticated multilingual resource that enables speakers to optimise their communicative effectiveness through strategic deployment of diverse linguistic capabilities to enhance interactional engagement among the interlocutors. In addition, the usage of translanguaging was also evident during students-students talk as they negotiate meaning to keep the interaction sustained. In another instance, during the presentation of group discourse, the approach of allowing student to use translanguaging enabled them to articulate complex idea which would otherwise remain unspoken due to language barrier.

Week 3_Class1_TC

73	S3	So from the specific role as a coach uhh first as a coach
		have to setting uhh **bukan**
74		Had setting a station like coaches should establish the tiers
		station for behaviour form the
75		Second for multi open communication aku **takut** have to
		creating environment where athlete feel comfortable

Student 3 (S3) attempted to explain the specific roles of a coach and encountered linguistic challenges when trying to express the concept of "establishing tiers or stations." The student's use of **"bukan"** (no/not) in line 73 signalled a moment of linguistic uncertainty as she recognise the word or phrase being formulated was inadequate to convey the intended meaning.

This self-repair occurred publicly within the group discourse suggesting that the classroom environment had cultivated a psychological safety space for students to engage without fear of embarrassment or negative evaluation. The student's willingness to persist through the challenge indicates internalisation of dialogic values where exploratory talk and meaning negotiation are emphasised over linguistic accuracy. This aligns with Alexander's (2020) principle of a "supportive" dialogic environment, wherein students feel empowered to articulate ideas freely by knowing that the process of formulating thought is valued in dialogic interaction.

In line 75, S3's use of the phrase **"aku takut"** (I'm worried) followed by a continuation of the explanation reveals another dimension of how translanguaging supports participation. The code-switching allowed the student to express an uncertainty while maintaining the development of topic about creating environments where athletes feel comfortable. The emancipation of student expressing personal uncertainty (**"aku takut"**) while discussing the creation of comfortable environments for athletes is particularly noteworthy. It suggests the importance of dialogic space while simultaneously experiencing a need for that safety in the linguistic performance itself. This indicates awareness of how emotional security enables fuller participation in a group discourse (Gao et al., 2024; Onrubia et al., 2024).

From an inclusive pedagogy perspective, this excerpt demonstrates how acceptance of translanguaging fundamentally enhance group discourse in ESL classrooms. If the instructor insisted on using English only in the class, students would likely offer an oversimplified contribution or remain silent altogether. Instead, the multilingual affordances of the classroom enabled S3 to engage with conceptually by deploying linguistic resources such as code-switching or translanguaging were necessary to sustain that interaction. This represents what García and Wei (2014) describe as maximising "semiotic resources" to expand rather than restrict meaning-making possibilities.

Furthermore, the excerpt reinforces that enhanced participation in multilingual contexts does require students to express in a linguistically accurate manner rather, it means to have a sustained interaction with complex ideas despite linguistic challenges. S3's contribution by code-switching and self-repair, successfully conveyed substantive understanding of coaching topic. The instructor's acceptance of this translanguaging as there were no

any interruption from the instructors further reinforces the inclusive nature of the dialogic environment. Students did not signal confusion or impatience with S3's linguistic negotiation, suggesting that translanguaging had become a normalised and accepted aspect of group discourse. The acceptance indicates that inclusive multilingual norms had been collectively adopted by the students as they co-create what Canagarajah (2011) terms a "translingual contact zone" which is a space of linguistic diversity that is not merely tolerated but actively leveraged as a resource for deeper collective understanding.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the strategic integration of multilingual pedagogical practices within a dialogic teaching framework significantly enhances the quality of classroom discourse in Malaysian ESL higher education classrooms. The findings reveal that instructors who consciously employ code-switching and translanguaging do not merely accommodate linguistic diversity but actively leverage it as a scaffold to facilitate deeper cognitive and dialogic engagement. By creating psychologically safe and linguistically flexible spaces, instructors empower students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires, thereby transforming multilingualism from a perceived obstacle into a critical resource for meaning-making. This challenges monolingual ideologies that dominate traditional language education by providing empirical evidence for the pedagogical value of students' multilingual repertoires.

The analysis underscores that such an approach directly supports the core principles of Alexander's dialogic teaching framework (R. Alexander, 2018a, 2020; R. J. Alexander, 2008). The use of students' first languages (L1) and culturally embedded references fosters a collective and supportive environment, enabling a more cumulative construction of knowledge. Furthermore, it amplifies student agency, as learners confidently select linguistic resources that best express their ideas and cultural identities, ensuring interactions are purposeful and authentic in a group discourse.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on multilingual pedagogies by demonstrating how theoretical frameworks can be practically implemented in dialogic classrooms to enhance interaction among second language learners. It provides valuable guidance for ESL educators seeking to create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments in this 21st century while maintaining academic rigor and language learning goals to produce undergraduates who are able to think critically and communicative effectively.

Future educational practice and policy should recognise multilingualism as a valuable resource for enhancing dialogic learning rather than an obstacle to be overcome. This shift in perspective has the potential to transform ESL education in multilingual contexts, creating more equitable and effective learning opportunities for all students.

While this study offers valuable insights, the research was conducted as a qualitative case study with a small, purposively selected sample of three experienced instructors at a single public university. Thus, the findings are not statistically generalizable to all ESL contexts in Malaysia and further research can look into mixed-methods or quantitative studies across multiple institutions to validate and quantify the impact of multilingual dialogic teaching on specific language proficiency outcomes.

References

Abdul Malek, N. (2024). The Perception of Malaysian Undergraduates towards Bilingualism and Multilingualism in Language Learning. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Future Ready Learning and Education*, *34*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.37934/frle.34.1.19

AlAfnan, M. A., MohdZuki, S. F., & AlAfnan, S. M. (2025). Blending Identities: Exploring the Linguistic, Cultural, and Pragmatic Dimensions of Manglish in the Malaysian Society. *Studies in Media and Communication*, *13*(3), 15. https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v13i3.7654

Alexander, R. (2018a). Developing dialogic teaching: Genesis, process, trial. *Research Papers in Education*, *33*(5), 561–598. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1481140

Alexander, R. (2018b). Developing dialogic teaching: Genesis, process, trial. *Research Papers in Education*, *33*(5), 561–598. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1481140

Alexander, R. (2020). *A Dialogic Teaching Companion* (1st edn). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351040143

Alexander, R. J. (2008). *Towards dialogic teaching: Rethinking classroom talk*.

Babazade, Y. (2025). The Bilingual Brain: Cognitive Benefits and Challenges of Multilingualism. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education*, *2*(3), 55–63. https://doi.org/10.69760/egjlle.2500197

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burner, T., & Carlsen, C. (2023a). Teachers' multilingual beliefs and practices in English classrooms: A scoping review. *Review of Education*, *11*(2), e3407. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3407

Burner, T., & Carlsen, C. (2023b). Teachers' multilingual beliefs and practices in English classrooms: A scoping review. *Review of Education*, *11*(2), e3407. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3407

Campbell, A. E., Davis, G. E., & Adams, V. M. (2007). Cognitive Demands and Second-Language Learners: A Framework for Analyzing Mathematics Instructional Contexts. *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, *9*(1), 3–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/10986060709336603

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Translanguaging in the classroom: Emerging issues for research and pedagogy. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *2*(2011), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110239331.1

Candilas, K., Villanueva, I., Taglinao, E. M., & Villarta, K. (2023). A Phenomenological Inquiry of Code-Switching Among College Students. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, *14*(1), 120–138. https://doi.org/10.54855/acoj.231418

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy*. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:142746024

Donham, C., & Andrews, T. C. (2023). "What's Your Thinking behind That?" Exploring Why Biology Instructors Use Classroom Discourse. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, *24*(2), e00132-22. https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.00132-22

Gao, L., Li, X., Zheng, Y., Li, Y., Wang, D., & Bao, H. (2024). Discourse moves and socio-emotional interactions in collaborative argumentation: Exploring how their co-occurrence impacts argumentation quality. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *52*, 101525. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2024.101525

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765

Gibbons, P. (2018). *Bridging Discourses in the ESL Classroom*. Bloomsbury Publishing. https://digital.casalini.it/9781350063297

Gillies, R. M. (2014). Dialogic interactions in the cooperative classroom. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *76*, 178–189. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.02.009

Goldstein, L. S. (n.d.). *Teacherly Love: Intimacy, Commitment, and Passion in Classroom Life*.

Hossain, M. I., Yagamaran, K. S. A., Afrin, T., Limon, N., Nasiruzzaman, M., & Karim, A. M. (2018). Factors Influencing Unemployment among Fresh Graduates: A Case Study in Klang Valley, Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *8*(9). https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v8-i9/4859

Hou, Z., Li, H., Gao, L., Ou, J., & Xu, M. (2024). Differential neural representations of syntactic and semantic information across languages in Chinese-English bilinguals. *NeuroImage*, *303*, 120928. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2024.120928

How, S. Y., Chan, S. H., & Abdullah, A. N. (2015). Language Vitality of Malaysian Languages and Its Relation to Identity. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, *15*(2), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2015-1502-08

Hu, H., & Zhang, L. (2024). Innovation in Practice: Embracing Multilingualism in an Intensive English Programme. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, *14*(0). https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v14i0.1514

Huda, T., Nevia, Y. I., & Mushoma, N. (2025). Code Switching and Code Mixing Uttered by Thai Students in Indonesia: Types and Contributing Factors. *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, *8*(1), 36–47. https://doi.org/10.33503/journey.v8i1.1490

Jayadi, K., Abduh, A., & Basri, M. (2022). A meta-analysis of multicultural education paradigm in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, *8*(1), e08828. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e08828

Jocuns, K. (2021). Dialogic Teaching as a Way to Promote Students' English Language Use in EFL classroom. *PASAA*, *62*(1), 173–203. https://doi.org/10.58837/CHULA.PASAA.62.1.7

Jogulu, L. N. (2024). CODE-SWITCHING AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY IN ESL CLASSROOMS. *International Journal of Humanities, Philosophy and Language*, *7*(26), 01–21. https://doi.org/10.35631/IJHPL.726001

Jumal, N. A. B., AlSaqqaf, A., & Mohamed, N. Z. N. (2019). Code Switching in Malaysian Secondary ESL Classroom: A Preliminary Study from Sabah. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, *9*(5), 327–334. https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.1.2019.95.327.334

Juzwik, M. M., Nystrand, M., Kelly, S., & Sherry, M. B. (2008). Oral Narrative Genres as Dialogic Resources for Classroom Literature Study: A Contextualized Case Study of Conversational Narrative Discussion. *American Educational Research Journal*, *45*(4), 1111–1154. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831208321444

Michaels, S., O'Connor, C., & Resnick, L. B. (2008). Deliberative Discourse Idealized and Realized: Accountable Talk in the Classroom and in Civic Life. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *27*(4), 283–297. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-007-9071-1

Mohamed Mokhtar, M., Muhamad, M., Bahari, A. A., & Mohd. Khaja, F. N. (2022). Dataset from Code-switching between English and Malay Languages in Malaysian Premier Polytechnics ESL Classrooms. *Data in Brief*, *45*, 108709. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2022.108709

Muntasir, M., & Akbar, I. (2023). Revisiting the Significance of ZDP and Scaffolding in English Language Teaching. *JETLEE : Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature*, *3*(1), 40–45. https://doi.org/10.47766/jetlee.v3i1.1276

Navaz, A. M. M. (2020). Developing a Framework for Understanding Lecturer-Student Interaction in English-Medium Undergraduate Lectures in Sri Lanka: First Step Towards Dialogic Teaching. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, *10*(6), 395. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n6p395

Neokleous, G., & Karpava, S. (2023). Comparing pre-service teacher attitudes toward the use of students' home language(s) in linguistically diverse English as an additional language classrooms in Norway and Cyprus. *Frontiers in Education*, *8*, 1254025. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1254025

Onrubia, J., Minguela, M., & Roca, B. (2024). Facilitators' specific discourse strategies to construct socio-emotional dynamics promoting collaboration and dialogue in teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *144*, 104581. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104581

Osidak, V., Natsiuk, M., & Vogt, K. (2024). TEACHER MULTILINGUAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: IMPLICATIONS FOR COURSE DEVELOPMENT. *Advanced Education*, *12*(24), 92–117. https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.298917

Paudel, P. (2020). Teaching English in Multilingual Contexts: Teachers' Perspectives. *Prithvi Academic Journal*, *3*, 33–46. https://doi.org/10.3126/paj.v3i0.29557

Phan Le Ha, Bao, D., & Windle, J. (Eds). (2024). *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*. Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1

Poehner, M. E., & Lantolf, J. P. (2021). The ZPD, Second Language Learning, and the Transposition ~ Transformation Dialectic. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *17*(3), 31–41. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2021170306

Qin, J. (2022). A Theoretical Review on the Role of English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Self-Disclosure in Shaping Classroom Climate and Immediacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 945046. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.945046

Qin, K., Wolf, J., & Llosa, L. (2025). From everyday language to disciplinary discourse: Culturally and linguistically sustaining dialogic instruction with multilingual learners. *TESOL Journal*, *16*(1), e913. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.913

Raki, D. A., & Sulaiman, N. A. (2021). Code-Switching Practice in English Language Classrooms among Malaysian Teachers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *11*(8), Pages 534-549. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i8/10555

Ramakarsinin, G. G., Qi, Z. X., & Maniam, M. (2024). A study on translanguaging between Malaysia and China primary schools' students in ESL writing classroom. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, *14*(9), 303–317. https://doi.org/10.55493/5007.v14i9.5191

Ramasamy, S. A., & Zainal, A. Z. (2023). FACILITATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE COLLECTIVELY THROUGH DIALOGIC DISCOURSE: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING. *Teflin Journal*, *34*(1), 79–96. https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v34i1/79-96

Resnick, L., Asterhan, C., & Clarke, S. (2015). *Introduction: Talk, Learning, and Teaching* (pp. 251–272). https://doi.org/10.3102/978-0-935302-43-1_1

Robillos, R. J., Art-in, S., & Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand, asitthi@kku.ac.th. (2023). Argument Mapping with Translanguaging Pedagogy: A Panacea for EFL Students' Challenges in Writing Argumentative Essays. *International Journal of Instruction*, *16*(4), 651–672. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16437a

Romios, L., Musthafa, B., & Lengkanawati, N. S. (2024). STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIALOGIC TEACHING FOR IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS AT A UNIVERSITY IN WEST JAVA. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *12*(2), 449–462. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i2.9531

Sebastián, C., & Villarroel-Henríquez, V. (2024). Discursive interactions in the classroom. Ideas to expand research and enhance teaching practice to multiply opportunities to learn / *Interacciones discursivas en el aula. Pistas para ampliar la investigación y potenciar la práctica docente*. *Culture and Education: Cultura y Educación*, *36*(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/11356405241235064

Shaari, A., Ismail, H. N., & Hamzah, A. (2018). Describing Dialogic Teaching and Learning in A Malaysian Higher Learning Institution Setting: A Discussion of Its Observational Findings. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, *32*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.21315/apjee2017.32.1

Shan Shan, V. W., & Binti Abdul Aziz, A. (2025). Use of Pupils' Mother Tongue in Malaysia ESL Classroom: Teachers' Perspective. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *14*(2), Pages 570-587. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i2/25059

Tee, P. K., Wong, L. C., Dada, M., Song, B. L., & Ng, C. P. (2024). Demand for digital skills, skill gaps and graduate employability: Evidence from employers in Malaysia. *F1000Research*, *13*, 389. https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.148514.1

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (M. Cole, V. Jolm-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds). Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4

Wass, R., & Golding, C. (2014). Sharpening a tool for teaching: The zone of proximal development. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *19*(6), 671–684. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2014.901958

Wegerif, R. (2019). Dialogic education. In *Education Review* (Vol. 19).

Wei, M. (2024). The Implications of the Zone of Proximal Development for English Teaching. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, *36*(1), 87–90. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/36/20240428

Yusof, S. N., Hussin, S. N. L., & Abdul Kadir, F. (2021). L1 vs L2 Preferences in Malaysian ESL Classrooms. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *10*(3), Pages 1196-1210. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i3/11014

Zainuddin, S. Z. B., Pillai, S., Dumanig, F. P., & Phillip, A. (2019). English language and graduate employability. *Education + Training*, *61*(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-06-2017-0089