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# Transforming EAL Education through Translanguaging: Teachers' Agency in AI-Mediated Multilingual Language Support

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# Abstract

This study examines how secondary EAL teachers perceive and utilize translanguaging as a differentiated resource when working with newly arrived students in Australia. A qualitative case study design was used at a publicly funded English Language School in Victoria, involving semi-structured interviews with EAL teachers and thematic analysis. The findings show that the language background of the students was perceived by the teachers as a resource to aid comprehension, engagement, collaboration, confidence, and inclusion. In addition, teachers mentioned the use of bilingual scaffolding, collaboration between peers, MELAs, and AI-powered translation as multilingual resources. Time limits, curriculum constraints, available resources, and uncertainty of the accuracy of AI-powered translation were the main factors affecting teachers' pedagogical decisions.


# INTRODUCTION

Migration and the movements of refugees across the globe have made secondary school classrooms increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse. In the Australian context, newly enrolled students who learn English as an Additional Language (EAL) might be enrolled in either a mainstream or specialized EAL program, coming from different linguistic, educational, and English language competence backgrounds, and in some cases having interrupted schooling. This might pose great challenges for teachers trying to ensure equitable access to learning, active engagement, and development within the classroom. Nevertheless, despite such diversity, English-dominant or monolingual approaches to language education might marginalize students’ mother tongue languages, viewing them as something apart from, rather than connected with learning. This practice might lead to neglecting learners’ prior linguistic knowledge, cultural resources, and educational experience (Cummins, 2007; García, 2009).

Translanguaging has developed as an approach that is grounded on a strength rather than deficiency paradigm where there is no sharp distinction between languages; it treats the complete repertoire of multilingual learners as their resource to make meaning, learn, participate, and construct identity (García & Li, 2014). Translanguaging enables teachers and learners to use all available linguistic resources strategically in order to help comprehension and engagement instead of regarding students’ home languages as hindrances to the acquisition of English language skills. It is especially useful in the case of newly arrived EAL learners whose linguistic resources can be sources of support.

Nevertheless, the educational potential of translanguaging is not limited to the existence of multilingual educational materials but largely depends on teachers’ understanding and reaction to the varying needs of learners. In its turn, differentiated instruction implies that teachers modify content, processes, and experiences in accordance with learner variability (Tomlinson, 2017), whereas inclusive education aims at overcoming barriers to inclusion and learning and taking account of learner variability as a key element of educational practice (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Thus, from this point of view, translanguaging should not be perceived as identical to either differentiated or inclusive education, but rather as one educational resource in the context of differentiated and inclusive teaching.

In this perspective, translanguaging pedagogy is understood as a phenomenon that puts teacher agency in the core, and teachers are perceived as people who actively make decisions based on their professional judgment and use them to adapt certain practices for particular classroom context (Bandura, 2006; Ollerhead, 2019). In this process, teachers make specific decisions regarding the use of the learners' home language in classroom environment based on mediation through activities, linguistic support and peer interactions (García & Li, 2014; Ollerhead, 2019). Such decisions might be made based on different factors, such as teachers' perceptions, linguistic needs of learners, resource availability, requirements of curricula, and other constraints (Bandura, 2006; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Considering this, it is crucial to look at translanguaging as a practice but also as a phenomenon in relation to contextual factors and teacher agency.

The changing technological context also brings another dimension to multilingual support. Human assistance, such as MEAs, might not be available to every language group in multilingual educational contexts. However, MEAs can help by providing linguistic and contextual support to the teacher and multilingual students (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li, 2014). Moreover, new translation technologies powered by AI can now be found in educational practice. The recent research reveals that such technologies can provide additional language support, facilitate communication, and promote differentiated learning (Donley, 2024; Smith & Hu, 2025). However, the use of any technology is still the prerogative of the teacher. Research among Australian EAL teachers revealed that the decisions regarding when and where generative AI can be used and how it can be used by the teacher are made by the teacher, taking into account pedagogical and contextual considerations (Barnes & Tour, 2026). It means that teachers should take into consideration the accuracy and educational value of the tool. Thus, the AI-mediated support can be considered yet another multilingual resource. Within the Victorian context, the New Arrivals Program (NAP) provides specialised educational support for newly arrived learners, making it a particularly relevant setting in which to examine multilingual and inclusive pedagogical practices. However, limited empirical research has examined how secondary EAL teachers enact translanguaging as part of differentiated and inclusive pedagogies in newly arrived settings, particularly in relation to teachers' pedagogical agency and the emerging use of AI-mediated multilingual support. This study addresses this gap by exploring how secondary EAL teachers understand and implement translanguaging as a differentiated pedagogical resource for supporting newly arrived learners, and how they make use of human and AI-mediated multilingual support in their classroom practice.

Therefore, the current qualitative case study explores the process of pedagogical decision-making among teachers working in an Australian secondary EAL setting. It focuses on the use of students' native language resources, multilingual assistance, and emerging artificial intelligence (AI)-based translation applications in order to promote understanding and inclusion.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research adds to the existing literature on translanguaging by analyzing the use of multilingual pedagogy in the case of EAL classrooms with newly arrived learners in English speaking contries. Specifically, it focuses on how the learners' home languages could be used as pedagogic resources in different and inclusive classroom settings. This study, thus, promotes the strength-based approach to multilingualism, which goes beyond the deficit-orientation and English-only policies.

Translanguaging is further conceptualized not only through the lens of a specific pedagogical practice but also as an activity where teacher agency is crucial in order to make situated decisions about translanguaging practices. The use of multilingualism as pedagogical resources depends not only on the needs of the learners and requirements of the curricula but also on the availability of such resources and the specifics of the learning environment. Translanguaging further occurs in connection with AI-enabled automatic translation, and the use of such resources is also considered from the perspective of teacher agency.

Finally, the paper has practical significance for EAL teachers, schools, and policymakers. It could serve as an input for professional development and teaching practices where multilingual competences of students are seen as resources and differentiated and inclusive pedagogy is fostered. Bringing together translanguaging, teacher agency, multilingualism, and AI technologies, the research is relevant to EAL instruction of new arrivals in English-speaking countries.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review explores the connections between translanguaging pedagogy, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, teacher agency, and AI-mediated multilingual language support in the education of linguistically diverse learners. First, it explores the strengths of translanguaging as a pedagogical method that helps multilingual learners to utilize their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoire for learning and communication. Secondly, it explores the connections between translanguaging and differentiated instruction as a tool to help teachers meet the unique needs of their linguistically diverse students in connection to inclusive education. Lastly, it explores teacher agency in relation to the development of multilingual pedagogies and the emerging phenomenon of multilingual language support in EAL classrooms.

### Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging views multilingual speakers as having the potential to utilise their full repertoire of linguistic and semiotic practices to communicate, make meaning, and solve problems (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Within a sociocultural theoretical framework (Vygotsky, 1978), learning is defined as a socially mediated process that involves using language as an important mediating tool in the process of thinking and knowledge construction. This is why translanguaging is in line with the sociocultural approach, as it allows learners to access their linguistic repertoire to facilitate their learning process (Gibbons, 2015; Choi et al., 2024).

Translanguaging in classroom settings can be employed to enhance comprehension, expression, and participation prior to the completion of learning tasks in English (Choi et al., 2020; Ollerhead, 2019). In the case of recently arrived learners, the employment of their home languages can facilitate linking of new information and skills with previous knowledge and language skills and learning English language proficiency. This can also lead to the lowering of anxiety, increased confidence and involvement in classroom activities (Cummins, 2000; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Veliz & Nguyen, 2025).

Translanguaging as a pedagogical tool, on the other hand, does not only entail the use of several languages by the learners. Its success largely lies in how multilingual skills are integrated into the process of teaching and learning. There should be an evaluation of the language skills of the learner, previous knowledge, learning requirements and task demands before integrating home languages into scaffolding. Just like the sociocultural approach of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), teachers can offer linguistic and instructional scaffolding which will allow the learners to take part in activities that would be out of reach at their present independent stage of development. The strategies may involve bilingual explanations, peer interaction, multilingual conversations and the use of home languages in meaning making process (Gibbons, 2015; García & Li, 2014).

Translanguaging thus emerges as a pedagogical approach with increasing relevance, not merely an alternative form of language use. Translanguaging can facilitate greater involvement of multilingual learners in academic discourse, collaboration, and the utilization of their current language resources in the learning process. Studies of multilingual classes show that when students are encouraged to use their language repertoires flexibly, this results in improvements in peer interaction, problem-solving, and participation (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Gibbons, 2015). This makes translanguaging especially relevant in educational environments characterized by different levels of English language proficiency and education among learners.

**Translanguaging, Differentiated Instruction and Inclusive Education**

Translanguaging is an area that has close connections with differentiated instruction (DI). DI is defined as adjusting instruction based on individual students' needs, readiness, and interests (Tomlinson, 2017). It is especially pertinent for EAL students because each of them can differ by his/her level of English, literacy, previous education, cultural knowledge, and understanding of the Australian educational system. Thus, a common instruction in English may be inappropriate for all students.

Translanguaging may also be employed within differentiated instruction as a flexible language resource that responds to the learners’ needs. The teacher may employ learners' languages in order to explain some concept, to give directions on how to complete a task, to facilitate peer work, or to enable learners to think through an idea before saying it in English. The recognition of linguistic and cultural capital that learners have will not only make their learning experience more responsive but will also be a sign of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010).

This approach is also related to the principles of inclusive education that seek to minimize barriers to participation and learning as well as recognize the diversity of the learners as an aspect of education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The process of translanguaging may help the multilingual students access the information, communicate, collaborate, and participate in the process. At the same time, the recognition of the home languages of the learners may also contribute to the sense of their identity and belonging, especially when it comes to those students who come to the new language environment.

It should be noted that translanguaging, differentiated instruction, and inclusive education are interrelated but separate concepts. Translanguaging is the intentional utilization of multilingual linguistic and semiotic resources, differentiated instruction implies adjustments in the teaching process according to differences between learners, and inclusive education implies an approach towards equity and reduction of barriers to learning. Consequently, translanguaging can be viewed as one of the instructional tools within differentiated instruction.

**Teacher Agency in Translanguaging Practice**

While translanguaging is shown to have great benefits in education, its deployment cannot be considered without teachers' pedagogical agency. Translanguaging does not happen just because multilingual learners are in the classroom. The teachers decide in situ how, why, and when to include home languages of their students as part of their teaching practice depending on the learners' needs, aims, classroom discourse, and institutional expectations (Bandura, 2006; Ollerhead, 2019).

Teachers' agency can thus be viewed as a crucial means by which translanguaging takes place. Teachers may adjust their explanations, organize students, promote multilingual interactions among peers, use bilingual materials, or change tasks based on the linguistic needs of the learners. Such adjustments might be influenced by the learners, content being taught, context of the classroom, and learning stages (García & Li, 2014; Ollerhead, 2019).

Teachers' beliefs and professional knowledge can also affect the application of translanguaging. Teachers who recognize the value of the language spoken at home by the learners will encourage multilingualism while English only beliefs, lack of professional knowledge on how to teach in a multilingual environment, and the challenge to cover the entire curriculum may hinder teachers' practice. The case is even more complicated for EAL learners who have just joined school since the English level of the EAL learners can range widely. There are also time limitations and assessment requirements that teachers have to meet (Bandura, 2006; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

The focus moves from whether translanguaging works in theory to how teachers apply this approach in real-world teaching situations. Investigating teacher agency is thus crucial in making the connection between translanguaging as a theoretical framework and its implementation in the classroom, understanding the fact that decisions made by teachers are determined not only by their professional judgment but also by the context in which they operate.

**Multilingual Education Assistants and AI-Mediated Language Support**

The process of implementing multilingual pedagogy depends on the availability of both human and technological resources. MEA's can be very helpful in the multilingual EAL context where the linguistic and cultural knowledge offered by the MEA's may assist both teachers and learners in communicating, understanding instructions and concepts, and participating in classroom activities (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li, 2014). The challenge is that human multilingual assistance may not always be possible for all languages or classrooms.

Under these circumstances, another avenue for multilingual mediation is offered by artificial intelligence translation tools and other digital linguistic resources. The use of these tools for the purposes of facilitation of communication, language support, and differentiated learning is suggested by recent studies (Donley, 2024; Smith & Hu, 2025). Newly arrived EAL learners can benefit from quick access to translations, vocabulary, instructions, and explanations provided by these tools in case no human assistance is available.

However, the use of AI-enabled assistance also poses some difficulties. In particular, machine translations do not always accurately convey context, cultural references, or the level of language complexity required. Thus, teachers should evaluate AI tools for their accuracy and suitability in educational contexts. Studies of Australian EAL teachers reveal that these considerations are influenced by the pedagogical and contextual variables (Barnes & Tour, 2026).

Hence, both human and AI-mediated support should be seen as complementing rather than substituting each other. MEAs and bilingual support staff are capable of offering linguistically and culturally relevant assistance, enabling students to participate and using home languages in EAL classes (Kakos, 2022; Partridge & Harper, 2023). At the same time, digital and AI-based resources can offer supplementary multilingual assistance, including translation and assistance with obtaining access to educational content (Donley, 2024; Lee, 2025). It is up to the teacher to make use of these sources of support depending on individual students' needs and circumstances in class, emphasizing the significance of teacher discretion in multilingual pedagogy. Investigating the way teachers manage these sources of multilingual support is an essential extension of translanguaging research.

**Synthesis and Research Gap**

The review of the literature points to the interconnected nature of translanguaging, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, and teacher agency in multilingual EAL classes. Translanguaging allows students to use their repertoire of languages for meaning-making, participation, and identity formation (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018). At the same time, it may be viewed as a versatile tool in differentiated instruction that will help address individual needs of students (Tomlinson, 2017; Ollerhead, 2019) as well as a tool for promoting inclusive education by eliminating linguistic barriers and embracing multilingualism (Cummins, 2007; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In this respect, teachers' pedagogical

agency is critical in terms of adapting these practices for certain learners within a specific classroom setting (Bandura, 2006).

However, not much is known regarding the role that secondary EAL teachers play when implementing translanguaging in actual school contexts for newly arrived students. Specifically, there is a dearth of studies that have looked into how teachers use both translanguaging along with differentiation and inclusion while dealing with real-life issues like time constraints, curriculum demands, and lack of multilingual support. With the advent of AI-based language support, it becomes another layer but again requires research on how teachers can integrate AI and human multilingual support along with translanguaging (Donley, 2024; Smith & Hu, 2025).

This research fills in these gaps through investigating the use of translanguaging as a differentiated resource by secondary EAL teachers as a tool for teaching newly arrived EAL students and the use of human and AI-assisted multilingual assistance based on the needs of the learners. In doing so, it combines translanguaging, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, teacher agency, and multilingual mediation in one holistic approach. It focuses on how secondary EAL teachers perceive and utilize translanguaging as a differentiated teaching strategy to promote inclusive education for new EAL learners. The study is especially interested in the roles of teacher autonomy, learners' home languages, and multilingual support through humans and AI.

The study addresses the following research questions:

**RQ1. Teachers' perceptions and enactment of translanguaging as differentiated practice**

How do secondary EAL teachers perceive and employ translanguaging as a differentiated instructional strategy to address the varied linguistic, cultural, and academic needs of their students?

**RQ2. Human and technology-mediated multilingual support**

How do teachers leverage Multilingual Education Assistants and technology-based translation or any other multilingual language support to support recently arrived EAL students?

**RQ3. Limitations and contextual issues**

What limitations and contextual factors affect the enactment of translanguaging and multilingual support by teachers?

# METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This research was conducted using the case study method, which allowed for gaining insight into the ways in which EAL teachers conceptualize and practice translanguaging as a tool of differentiated teaching aimed at ensuring inclusive education for recently arrived EAL learners. Qualitative case study

is especially well suited for analyzing such practices in real-life contexts since it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the experience and reasoning of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

In connection to the research questions, the case study method facilitated an examination of how teachers have used their pedagogical agency in utilizing students' home languages, modifying teaching practices, and making use of multilingual support both human and AI based. This research design also made it possible for the consideration of the context-specific factors that influenced the use of translanguaging in recently arrived EAL classrooms.

**Participants and Sampling**

This research was carried out at an English language school in Victoria, Australia, which is supported by the government and works under the New Arrivals Program (NAP). The school offers focused language education to newly arrived migrants and refugees with various linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Most of the learners are not fluent in English and have a different educational background, sometimes even with disrupted education. This makes the chosen environment quite suitable for investigating the role of multilingual resources used by teachers for differentiated and inclusive learning.

Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of participants who could contribute to the depth and relevance of insights about the investigated phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Five teachers of English as an additional language working at secondary level were involved in the research. Participants of the study were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) teaching experience with newly arrived EAL students in the chosen environment; (2) experience with multilingual and/or translanguaging approach; and (3) differentiated instruction experience.

Participants were at different stages in their careers as well as coming from different professions that gave them different perspectives about translanguaging, differentiated instruction, class interactions, and learning engagement. Each of the participants was involved in teaching classes containing students with different degrees of proficiency in English and different languages. Thus, this variety made it possible to explore how the teacher's teaching techniques can be different depending on the learner's needs.

**Data Collection**

For obtaining data on teachers' perceptions about translanguaging and differentiation in education, the semi-structured interviews were selected as the principal method. The interviews covered questions concerning teachers' perceptions of the potential role of their students' home languages in the learning process, the use of multilingualism by the teacher, and the ways in which they adjust the teaching process in accordance with the students' unique needs. In addition, participants were invited to share their experience of working with Multilingual Education Assistants (MEAs), AI-translators, and other multilingual resources.

The interview protocol included questions that had guiding questions with an element of flexibility in asking further questions where necessary. Probing was done in order to get information on the examples that the teachers gave in regard to their practices, the rationale behind some of their pedagogical choices, and the difficulties they faced in doing translanguaging and multilingual teaching.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis was done through thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a method that helps in detecting common themes within the data collected from the interviews and in answering the research questions regarding teachers' conceptions, practices, pedagogical agency, and multilingual language support.

The initial coding process involved manual coding with a spreadsheet being used to organize codes, key themes, and quotes from the interviews. Initial codes were on the use of students' home language, bilingual scaffolding, peer work, differentiated instruction, student engagement, identity affirmation, teacher confidence, multilingual learning, resource issues, curriculum considerations, and the use of AI language support.

The coding was then analyzed for more comprehensive themes based on the research questions and theoretical framework. This coding process was refined iteratively to ensure internal consistency, relevance, and conceptual distinctiveness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both similarities and differences among the coded data, particularly regarding the teacher pedagogy, the use of multilingual sources, and the contexts surrounding them, were considered in the analysis.

**Ethical Considerations**

The research was conducted using ethical procedures. All participants were given an informed consent form before data was collected. Participants had a right to withdraw from the research according to the research procedures that had been approved.

For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used for the participants and all information that could be used to identify the participants, and the school has been anonymised. The research setting is described as a government funded English language school in Victoria that operates under the Victorian New Arrivals Program.

# FINDINGS

The three themes found in relation to how teachers practiced translanguaging, multilingual resources including human and AI technology, and contextual factors that affected multilingual teaching are discussed in detail in the analysis section. Overall, the role played by students' home language was seen more positively as an asset in helping students learn than a hindrance to learning English by the teachers across all the data collected. However, not all aspects of multilingual teaching occurred consistently; instead, it varied depending on different contextual factors.

**Translanguaging as a Resource for Differentiated Learning**

Translanguaging was regarded by the participants as a valuable resource for teaching learners with various levels of proficiency and background in English. Translanguaging was used to explain concepts, make unfamiliar vocabulary clear, connect previous knowledge, aid with completing tasks, and to promote communication. Translanguaging did not mean the substitution of English lessons with another language but was rather seen as a type of scaffolding.

*"Sometimes they understand the concept, but they don't have the English to explain it, so using their first language helps them get started."*

Teachers further discussed the modification of multilingual scaffolding depending on learners' needs and complexity of learning activities. Some of these strategies were bilingual explanations, translations of key words, peer collaboration, multilingual dialogue, and flexible instructional scaffolding. One teacher explained:

*"I don't translate everything. Some students need more support, while others can move into English more quickly."*

In other words, it implies that the educators were not seeing the idea of translanguaging as a single approach applicable to all students but rather using multilingual tools selectively as a way of differentiated support.

Interview results have further shown that there were other advantages that the teachers saw aside from immediate understanding. The ability of students to speak in their native tongues would help boost their confidence, participation, and communication. This would further help the students realize that what they already know is also respected.

*"When students can use their own language, they feel more comfortable and are more willing to participate."*

In summary, translanguaging was viewed more as a dynamic pedagogical tool than as a rigid technique for instruction. This indicates that its application was directly linked to differentiated instruction, as the teachers were able to utilize multilingual techniques based on the linguistic needs and confidence of the learners.

**Translanguaging as a Resource for Differentiated Learning and Inclusive Education**

The term 'translanguaging' was discussed by teachers as a means of providing learners from diverse backgrounds greater access to learning. The participants pointed out that when the learner can use his/her first language, then he/she will be able to relate to new ideas, connect with previous knowledge, and take part in the activities which may have been inaccessible otherwise. As one teacher put it:

“They can bring what they already know from their own language into the lesson. That gives them another way to understand what we are learning.”

Teachers have also emphasized the significance of giving students opportunities to contribute in various ways as opposed to having all the students express their comprehension through the use of English only. Multilingual interaction was described by the participants to be flexible in use, especially when the learners were working in groups or developing ideas.

“Sometimes they can show their understanding in their own language first, and then we work on how to express that idea in English.”

This flexibility of teaching was seen by the teachers as especially helpful in the case of new arrivals, who might find it difficult to participate due to language issues. Translanguaging in this context thus took on a dual role of not only supporting language but offering a form of equity through access to learning while taking into consideration what linguistic knowledge the children already possessed.

**Teacher Agency within Contextual Constraints**

Another theme that emerged involved the influence of teachers’ agency on multilingual teaching practice. Teacher accounts highlighted the importance of making ongoing professional judgements about how to respond to students’ changing needs, rather than following a fixed model of multilingual instruction. These judgements depended on factors such as students’ language proficiency, previous educational experiences, learning needs, lesson objectives, and classroom dynamics. As one teacher stated:

“You have to make a judgement in the moment. What works for one class might not work for another class.”

In addition, teachers reported adapting their strategies according to the availability of resources. The availability of MEAs, bilingual materials, and other language support services could influence teacher decision-making. One participant observed:

“Sometimes you have the resources you need, and sometimes you have to find another way. It really depends on the situation.”

The usage of AI-mediated translation was also mentioned as another multilingual tool by the teachers. Even though AI would be able to help teachers with language issues in a short period of time, teachers often felt unsure regarding whether the translations provided by AI were accurate enough or not. As one of the teachers stated:

“Sometimes you’re not sure if the translation is completely accurate, and if the student trusts it, it could actually make things more confusing.”

“I’m not always sure how accurate the AI translation is, so I don’t feel completely comfortable relying on it with students.”

This ambiguity affected the teachers’ readiness to incorporate machine translation in their support for students using multiple languages. These constraints did not inhibit the teachers’ agency but affected the decision-making and the sustainability of specific strategies chosen.

Thus, it seems that teacher agency did not occur in a vacuum but in the context of the everyday practice of teaching. The agency of the teachers was based on the expertise and experience of the teachers and how they determined which multilingual tools would be appropriate in specific cases. On the other hand, the existence of MEA support, tools, and the ambiguity associated with AI translation made it possible for the teachers to make the choice they made.

# DISCUSSION

The results contribute to a more nuanced perspective on translanguaging in recently immigrated secondary EAL education. Translanguaging is not an equally consistent instructional approach but a versatile pedagogical tool used by the teachers depending on learner’s needs, instructional intentions and circumstances. There are three implications, which seem to be especially important: the connection between translanguaging and differentiated instruction, teacher’s agency and the growing role of AI mediated multilingual assistance.

**Translanguaging and Differentiated Instruction**

These findings are consistent with the literature review, where translanguaging is discussed as a strength-oriented strategy, which allows multilingual learners to use their language repertoire in order to make meaning and participate in the learning process (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014). In the current study, teachers viewed the students' home languages as potential resources for facilitating understanding, interaction, involvement, and self-confidence.

Most importantly, the findings indicate that translanguaging can serve as a resource in differentiated instruction. The teachers tailored the multilingual scaffolding to the particular level of English language proficiency of the students, their prior education, and learning needs. This idea underlies the key premise of the differentiated instruction – responsiveness to learners' diversity (Tomlinson, 2017).

Thus, the study adds to the understanding of the conceptual differentiation between translanguaging and differentiated instruction. Translanguaging is not by definition equivalent to differentiation, but multilingualism can be employed as one of the ways of differentiation. It is significant because it does not portray translanguaging as a universal approach and instead highlights its contextual nature and use.

The research has implications for inclusion in education as well. As the use of the students’ home language was validated as a resource for learning, linguistic differences became part of the classroom

pedagogy rather than something to be remedied. These practices might help create an environment where there are fewer barriers to participation (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Furthermore, the identity aspects of translanguaging are relevant because validation of the students' linguistic resources indicates validation of their identities and knowledge.

**Teacher Agency and the Enactment of Multilingual Pedagogy**

One of the significant contributions of the current study lies in its consideration of teacher agency in multilingual pedagogical practice. As follows from the findings, the process of using translanguaging as a strategy was not static but depended on students' language background, education background, learning needs, lesson goals, and class environment. The results indicate that translanguaging is a flexible practice that depends on teachers' professional judgement rather than a fixed procedure for teachers (García & Li, 2014; Ollerhead, 2019).

Teacher agency was also affected by the context of teachers' work in which they had to function. The presence of MEAs, bilingual materials, time, and curriculum constraints affected the way teachers were able to respond to the multilingual needs of their students. In this respect, teacher agency can be seen as situational rather than individual one. Such approach is especially crucial for the newly arrived EAL contexts when teachers have to face a lot of diversity among their students in terms of language proficiency, education, and learning needs.

**AI-Mediated Multilingual Support**

AI-assisted translation is one of the new forms of multilingual resources that can be found in EAL learning environment. According to the findings, the role of AI in supporting language development was seen as beneficial for getting prompt help with language difficulties in cases where human multilingual support cannot be used. Thus, AI can become an additional source of resources for supporting newly arrived students.

However, the lack of confidence in AI's ability to give accurate translation prevented teachers from using this resource. Thus, it means that just availability of technological devices is not enough for providing adequate multilingual support. Consequently, the findings can be interpreted in terms of complementary approach to human and AI resources: MEAs can give contextualized linguistic and cultural support, while AI can help with language difficulties on the spot (Barnes & Tour, 2026; Donley, 2024).

When combined, these results indicate the development of a multilingual support environment where teachers leverage linguistic capabilities, human help, and technology based on context. In contrast to replacing all types of multilingual support, artificial intelligence provides yet another support mechanism that teachers can choose to utilize within their differential EAL instruction.

**Implications for Inclusive EAL Education**

Overall, the results point to the need for flexible pedagogy in inclusive EAL education in addition to acknowledging the linguistic diversity among students. Translanguaging can be a useful tool in this differentiated teaching approach in which the teachers have the means to address diverse linguistic, educational and learning needs of the students. Translanguaging can provide an opportunity to acknowledge and utilize students' linguistic resources (García & Li, 2014; Ollerhead, 2019).

There are some implications that have emerged from these findings. Professional development training for the teachers can be helpful in enhancing their confidence in applying translanguaging strategies in addition to other multilingual strategies. Provision of MEAs, bilingual materials and guidance on multilingual teaching can assist teachers in dealing with newly arrived students in a flexible manner (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

These results further underscore the increasing importance of AI-based language assistance. AI technology can offer an alternative form of assistance in cases where direct multilingual assistance by humans is not readily available, but the proper guidance and monitoring by teachers are needed to implement this form of help. It can be viewed as another piece of the puzzle when it comes to multilingual assistance (Barnes & Tour, 2026; Donley, 2024). Overall, the research shows that embracing multilingualism as a resource along with proper teacher agency can make EAL teaching more responsive.

## CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study investigated the ways in which secondary EAL teachers used translanguaging as a differentiated resource for recently arrived EAL learners. The research suggests that teachers perceived students' home language as an important resource for learning. Additionally, teachers reported using multilingual assistance in a flexible manner based on the needs of individual learners and resources available.

Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of the complementary nature of human and AI-assisted multilingual support. MEAs helped with linguistic and cultural support in context, while artificial intelligence-assisted translations served as another source of information in case human assistance was not available immediately. However, the teachers' doubt concerning the reliability of machine-generated translations affected their decision to utilize such a tool. In other words, teachers played an important role in using multilingual sources.The study contributes to a more integrated understanding of multilingual pedagogy by connecting translanguaging, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, teacher agency, and multilingual mediation. It suggests that effective and inclusive EAL practice depends not only on teachers' pedagogical knowledge, but also on access to appropriate resources and institutional support.

There are certain limitations that must be stated. Firstly, the study has been carried out in one state-funded English language school in Victoria, Australia. Thus, the results are specific for this particular learning environment and cannot be easily extrapolated to the other EAL environments without taking

into account various discrepancies in the students' profile, available resources, teaching methods and institutional features. Secondly, this study was based solely on the results of the semi-structured interviews with EAL teachers. The results obtained reflect only what was stated by the participants, not independent observations of classroom activities.

Additionally, AI-based multilingual assistance is another fast-growing area, and it is possible that the abilities, effectiveness, and usability of AI translation software may continue to change with time. As a result, the attitudes and experiences of the teachers towards using such technologies may change as well. It would be important to conduct further studies in order to see how such technologies can be effectively used together with teacher knowledge and multilingual assistance.

## Declarations

# Author Contribution

Yuwei Zhang was solely responsible for the conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. The author reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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