

Japanese L2 learners and their teachers' attitudes toward translanguaging in an EMI context: A qualitative study

Sugene Kim

Nagoya University of Commerce & Business, Department of English Studies

sugene_kim@nucba.ac.jp

English medium instruction (EMI) for teaching language courses is a growing global phenomenon, but the use of the learners' L1—or translanguaging—as a verbal resource remains controversial. Cognitive SLA and communicative language teaching approaches view the practice as culpable as it demotivates learners from setting instrumental goals, whereas bilingual discourse and Vygotskian SLA studies suggest that judicious use of the L1 fosters classroom-based L2 development by leveraging the fluid languaging of learners. While teachers' attitudes toward translanguaging have been explored in numerous studies, fewer attempts have been made to examine learners' perspectives on their teachers' translanguaging in an EMI setting. To bridge the research gap, this study collected interview data from 67 Japanese EFL learners about their perspectives on L2 teachers' translanguaging in an EMI setting. For comparison purposes, data from eight English teachers were additionally collected from the same institution. Transcribed interview recordings were analysed using thematic analysis to identify salient themes related to the reasons for supporting or opposing the practice. The results indicate that while all faculty participants support and (wish to) implement translanguaging both in and out of the classroom, approximately two-thirds of the student participants hold a negative view of teachers' translanguaging. Students' attitudes are shown to correlate strongly with past experience of international communication using English as a lingua franca but not with target language proficiency. The findings are discussed in relation to why teachers' decision to translanguage needs to be context-driven and how translanguaging techniques can be put into practice in a way that helps maximise L2 learners' communicative potential.