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PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN MULTILINGUAL MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative comparative study investigates the influence of linguistic diversity on pedagogical discourse and instructional methodologies within Malaysian higher education institutions. This research investigates the impact of multilingualism on teaching philosophies, classroom communication strategies, and assessment practices through semi-structured interviews with 40 university lecturers from Islamic International University Malaysia (IIUM). Data was subjected to thematic analysis employing both inductive and deductive coding methodologies, complemented by cross-case pattern matching to discern convergences and divergences within institutional contexts. The findings indicate that lecturers traverse intricate linguistic terrains while reconciling conventional values with modern educational imperatives. Malaysian scholars exhibit advanced code-switching techniques and utilize multilingual pedagogies that embrace varied linguistic backgrounds while upholding academic integrity. The research delineates three principal themes: (1) language as a facilitator of knowledge construction in heterogeneous classrooms, (2) multilingual assessment methodologies and their influence on educational outcomes, and (3) the function of language policy in fostering instructional innovation. Findings demonstrate that language-aware pedagogy profoundly affects student engagement, comprehension, and academic achievement in multicultural environments. This research enriches applied linguistics by elucidating how educators modify their instructional language practices to accommodate ethnically and linguistically diverse student populations. We talk about what this means for language-in-education policy, teacher training, and curriculum design.

Keywords: Multilingual Pedagogy, Instructional Discourse, Language Education Policy, Malaysian Higher Education, Teaching Practices, Applied Linguistics, Code-Switching

1. INTRODUCTION

In multilingual societies, colleges and universities have a hard time coming up with teaching methods that work well for students from a wide range of backgrounds Kirkpatrick (2017), Lasagabaster (2018). In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaya is the national language, and English is a second language and the language of instruction in many universities. This means that lecturers have to deal with a lot of different languages every day Gill (2014), Yamat et al. (2014). This linguistic diversity engenders both opportunities and challenges as educators endeavor to provide quality instruction while ensuring accessibility for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds Poon (2013), Pandian, and Ramiah (2004).

The convergence of language policy and pedagogical practice in Malaysian higher education constitutes a significant domain for applied linguistics research. Malaysia's education system has undergone substantial policy transformations concerning the medium of instruction, transitioning from English during the colonial era to Bahasa Malaya following independence, and more recently, towards a heightened emphasis on English in the domains of science and technology Azirah Hashim and Leitner (2014), Gill (2006). These changes have a big effect on how teachers think about and carry out their lessons, especially when it comes to managing classroom discussions, making teaching materials, and judging how well students are learning Kaur et al. (2020), Manan et al. (2015).

Modern research in language education stresses that teaching methods cannot be comprehended in isolation from their sociocultural and linguistic frameworks García and Li (2014), Cenoz and Gorter (2015). Educators in multilingual settings must cultivate metalinguistic awareness and implement translanguaging strategies that utilize students' comprehensive linguistic repertoires García and Kleyn (2016). Nonetheless, institutional language policies, disciplinary conventions, and societal language ideologies may either restrict or facilitate pedagogical flexibility Spolsky (2004), Shohamy (2006).

Prior studies have investigated language-in-education policy in Malaysia Ali et al. (2012), Don and Abdullah (2014), challenges of English-medium instruction Tham and Yusoff (2020), and multilingual practices within disciplines Kaur et al. (2016). Nonetheless, there exists a paucity of comparative research examining how lecturers in various institutional contexts address the pedagogical challenges posed by linguistic diversity. Islamic International University Malaysia (IIUM) serve as particularly pertinent comparative institutions: IIUM utilizes English as the principal language of instruction while prioritizing Arabic for Islamic studies, all the while upholding a robust dedication to the advancement of the national language Ibrahim (2013), Asmah Haji Omar (2015).

This research tackles three interrelated deficiencies in contemporary scholarship. First, although extensive research analyzes language policy outcomes, there is a scarcity of studies that explore how lecturers implement language choices in their daily instructional practices Lin and Lo (2017). Second, the connection between linguistic diversity and pedagogical innovation in Malaysian higher education is still not well understood Selvaraj and Aziz (2019). Third, there is a scarcity of comparative analyses investigating the influence of institutional language policies on teaching practices across various university contexts Vaish (2008).

Therefore, this study investigates the following inquiries: (1) In what manner do lecturers at Malaysian universities conceptualize and execute multilingual pedagogical practices? (2) What language-related difficulties do teachers face in classrooms with students from different backgrounds, and how do they deal with these problems? (3) How do institutional language policies affect the quality of teaching and the development of new ways of teaching? (4) What distinctions are present between IIUM lecturers concerning language-conscious pedagogy?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The idea of multilingual pedagogies has come about because teachers are realizing that teaching in only one language is not enough for students who speak more than one language Cummins (2017), May (2014). García and Li (2014) translanguaging theory asserts that multilingual individuals have a unified linguistic repertoire instead of distinct language systems, thereby contesting conventional ideas of language boundaries in educational settings. This viewpoint has profound consequences for pedagogical practices, indicating that stringent language segregation may hinder rather than promote learning Creese and Blackledge (2010).

Recent studies indicate that strategic translanguaging in university classrooms can improve comprehension, facilitate knowledge construction, and affirm students' linguistic identities Cenoz and Gorter (2020), Paulsrud et al. (2017). Nonetheless, implementation differs markedly according to disciplinary contexts, institutional policies, and individual lecturers' beliefs regarding language and learning Macaro et al. (2018). Some teachers are okay with flexible language use, while others stick to stricter rules about how to use languages. This is often because they think it will help their students do better in school or on tests Dafouz and Smit (2016).

2.2. LANGUAGE POLICY AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE IN MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Language-in-education policy in Malaysia has experienced numerous changes that mirror wider sociopolitical discussions about national identity, economic growth, and access to education Azman (2016), Morshidi Sirat (2010). The Education Act 1996 made Bahasa Malaya the main language of instruction, but universities still have a lot of freedom to set their own language rules Kaur and Raman (2013). This freedom has led to different ways of doing things at different schools. Some schools focus on English to be more competitive internationally, while others focus on developing the national language Manan (2015).

Studies show that Malaysian universities often have to negotiate between official language policies and what actually happens in the classroom Schiffman (2012), Darmi and Albion (2017). Lecturers report using different methods to deal with linguistic diversity, such as code-switching, giving students materials in more than one language, and changing the level of difficulty of the language based on how well the students understand it Thirusanku and Yunus (2014). But these kinds of things might happen without formal institutional support or recognition David et al. (2015).

2.3. ACADEMIC DISCOURSE AND KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

Academic discourse refers to the specialized linguistic practices utilized for the construction, transmission, and evaluation of disciplinary knowledge Hyland (2009), Airey (2012). In multilingual settings, the interplay between language acquisition and disciplinary learning is notably intricate, as students are required to cultivate both linguistic competence and conceptual insight Dafouz et al. (2014). This dual challenge impacts both content comprehension and the advancement of academic literacy Arkoudis and Tran (2010).

Swain (2006) output hypothesis posits that language production enhances learning; however, multilingual students may face challenges in articulating complex ideas when compelled to utilize a language in which they are not proficient. Some academics contend that permitting strategic utilization of students' first languages may enhance engagement with course material while concurrently fostering additional language proficiency Fortune and Tedick (2008), Lyster (2007). Nonetheless, apprehensions endure regarding the possible adverse effects on academic language development if students excessively depend on their first language Turnbull et al. (2009).

2.4. ASSESSMENT IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

Assessment practices in linguistically diverse classrooms pose essential inquiries regarding construct validity and equity Shohamy (2011), McNamara and Roever (2006). When students are evaluated in a language that is not their primary language, it becomes difficult to differentiate between language proficiency and content knowledge Cummins (2000), Menken (2008). This issue is especially important in higher education, where complex academic ideas need advanced language to be expressed Hajer and Meestringa (2014).

Recent research supports linguistically responsive assessment that takes into account students' complete linguistic repertoires and offers various means to exhibit knowledge Leung and Lewkowicz (2013), Menken and Kleyn (2010). Strategies encompass offering assessment options, permitting translanguaging in responses, delivering language support, and assessing content independently from language proficiency Shohamy et al. (2008). Nonetheless, the execution of these methodologies significantly differs according to institutional contexts, disciplinary standards, and personal convictions of lecturers Elder and Davies (2006).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses sociocultural theory and language-in-education policy frameworks to examine how lecturers operate within multilingual pedagogical environments. Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory posits that learning transpires through social interaction facilitated by language and cultural instruments. In multilingual educational contexts, the available languages for mediating learning profoundly influence knowledge construction processes Lantolf and Thorne (2006). This viewpoint acknowledges that language functions not only as a transparent conduit for information transmission but also actively influences the comprehension and communication of concepts Halliday (1993). Language-in-education policy theory differentiates between de jure policies (official, documented policies) and

de facto policies (actual classroom practices) Spolsky (2004), Shohamy (2006). This distinction is essential for comprehending how institutional language policies are interpreted, negotiated, and executed by individual educators. Lecturers serve as policy arbiters, converting abstract policy directives into tangible pedagogical practices influenced by their beliefs, experiences, and contextual limitations Menken and García (2010), Johnson (2013). This study operates ecological frameworks on multilingualism, viewing languages as fluid resources that individuals strategically utilize in contexts Van (2004), Kramsch and Steffensen (2008). This perspective corresponds with contemporary advancements in translanguaging theory García and Li (2014) and contests conventional additive bilingualism frameworks that regard languages as distinct competencies to be cultivated separately Cummins (2000).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative comparative study used an interpretive framework to examine how lecturers at two Malaysian universities comprehend and implement language-conscious pedagogical practices. Qualitative methodology was chosen for its ability to elucidate the complexity, nuance, and contextual specificity of educational phenomena Merriam and Tisdell (2015), Denzin and Lincoln (2018). The comparative approach facilitated a systematic examination of similarities and differences across institutional contexts, revealing how diverse language policies and cultures influence instructional practices Bartlett and Vavrus (2017).

4.2. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The research was undertaken at Islamic International University Malaysia (IIUM), situated in the Klang Valley region. IIUM, which opened in 1983, uses English as its main language of instruction but also emphasizes Arabic for Islamic studies and Bahasa Malaya for some courses. The university has a wide range of students, including a lot of international students from Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries. IIUM was established in 1970 with the goal of making Bahasa Malaysia a language of scholarship. Since then, the school has gradually increased the use of English, especially in science and technology programs, while still being committed to the development of the national language. This study involved forty university lecturers, with twenty from each institution. Participants were chosen via purposive sampling to guarantee representation from diverse fields, including humanities, social sciences, Islamic studies, sciences, and engineering. Participants had to meet certain criteria, such as having at least three years of teaching experience, being currently employed full-time, and being willing to talk in depth about their teaching methods. There were 23 men and 17 women in the sample, and they had been teaching for between 3 and 28 years (mean = 12.4 years). Everyone who took part had a PhD in their field.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Researchers got the data by doing semi-structured interviews from March to September 2024. Each interview took 60 to 90 minutes and was done in the language that the participant preferred (English, Bahasa Malaya, or a mix of the two). The interview protocol included open-ended questions about five areas: (1) ideas about what makes teaching effective in multilingual settings, (2) strategies for choosing a language to use in the classroom, (3) problems that come up because of linguistic diversity, (4) ways of testing students in multilingual classrooms, and (5) how people feel about institutional language policies. Some of the questions were: How do you deal with language choices when you teach students from different language backgrounds? Can you tell me about some of the specific strategies you use to help students who may have trouble with the language of instruction? How do you make sure that your tests help students learn both language and content? And "How has the language policy of your school affected the way you teach? Follow-up probes prompted participants to furnish specific examples and expand upon their responses. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. A professional translator transcribed interviews in Bahasa Malaya word for word and then translated them into English. The translated transcripts were then back translated and checked for accuracy. Interviews in English were transcribed word for word. Researcher field notes that recorded contextual observations and new themes added to the interview transcripts. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. Interviews conducted in Bahasa Malaya were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English by a professional translator; translated transcripts were back translated and checked for accuracy.

Interviews conducted in English were transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were supplemented by researcher field notes documenting contextual observations and emerging themes.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Researcher used Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis to look at the interview data. The analysis consisted of becoming acquainted with the transcripts through multiple readings, creating preliminary codes, identifying themes, evaluating themes, delineating and labeling themes, and ultimately producing the final analysis. Inductive coding (letting themes come out of the data) and deductive coding (using ideas from literature) were both used. This made it possible to find unexpected patterns and systematically look at ideas that had already been found. The coding process went through several rounds. Two researchers did the first coding on their own, and then they compared their codes and talked about any differences they found. Codes were grouped into initial themes, which were then improved by comparing them to each other and to other cases. Cross-case pattern matching made it easier to find similarities and differences between IIUM participants. NVivo 12 software facilitated data management and analysis; however, the final development of themes depended on the researchers' interpretive judgment. To increase trustworthiness, several methods were used, such as spending more time with the data, having peers review the work, checking with a few participants, keeping an audit trail of analytical choices, and being aware of how our own language and education affected our interpretations Lincoln and Guba (1985).

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The institutional review boards at both universities gave their permission for this study. All participants gave their written consent after being given full information about the study's goals, methods, possible risks, and benefits. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity; pseudonyms are employed in the dissemination of findings. Participants maintained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The recordings and transcripts of the interviews are kept safe and will be destroyed after the required time period.

8. FINDINGS

Thematic analysis identified three principal themes concerning the management of linguistic diversity by Malaysian university lecturers in their pedagogical approaches: (1) Language as a Mediator of Knowledge Construction in Diverse Classrooms, (2) Strategic Multilingualism in Assessment Practices, and (3) Negotiating Institutional Language Policies and Pedagogical Innovation. There are several subthemes for each theme, which are explained below with quotes from participants to help make the point.

Theme 1: Language as Mediator of Knowledge Construction in Diverse Classrooms

Participants from both schools agreed that how well a student speaks a language has a big impact on how well they can understand the material. But they showed different ways of dealing with this problem. IIUM professors, who mostly taught English to students from all over the world, often used translanguaging techniques to help students understand.

> “I teach Islamic finance, and many concepts don't translate well from Arabic. So I might explain in English first, then provide the Arabic term, then sometimes use Malay for local students. It's about building bridges between languages to reach understanding.”

IIUM lecturers, dealing with the tension between Bahasa Malaya and English, talked about how they made conscious decisions about which language to use based on how hard the material was and the students' language backgrounds:

> "For advanced engineering concepts, I find English technical terms more precise. But I'll explain foundational concepts in Bahasa Malaya because students can grasp them better in their first language. Then we build up to the English terminology they'll need professionally."

A major finding was that teachers thought of code-switching not as a problem but as a useful teaching tool. They said that strategic language switching has many purposes, such as making complex ideas clearer, keeping students' attention, building rapport, and recognizing that students speak more than one language. One person said:

> "When I see confused faces, I know I need to code-switch. It's not about being lazy or not knowing how to speak English well; it's about being able to communicate well. If students can't understand, I haven't taught them anything, no matter what language I use."

However, participants also recognized conflicts between pedagogical efficacy and perceived academic rigor. Some people were worried that using students' first languages too much might make it harder for them to learn the academic language skills they need to be successful in their careers.

> "I have a hard time finding this balance. I want my students to really understand, but they also need to learn how to write academically in English. If I let them use too much Malay in discussions, am I really helping them in the long run?"

Theme 2: Strategic Multilingualism in Assessment Practices

Assessment proved to be a notably intricate field where language and content knowledge is intersected in a problematic manner. Lecturers stated that it is still hard to tell if poor assessment performance is due to a lack of understanding of the material or a lack of language skills. Several participants have changed how they graded students to deal with this problem:

> "I began giving essay prompts in both English and Bahasa Malaya. Students can choose which language to answer in, but I encourage English for practice. I look at their economic analysis, not their grammar. Of course, clarity of expression is important, but I try to keep content and language separate as much as possible."

Participants from IIUM, which serves a very diverse group of international students, talked about how they came up with language-supportive assessment strategies. These included giving non-native English speakers more time, letting them use bilingual dictionaries during tests, and giving them glossaries of technical terms.

> "I have students from 20 different countries. Their English levels are all over the place. If they're having trouble understanding the question, I can't fairly judge how well they understand molecular biology. So I use clearer language, more examples, and sometimes visual aids to help with the text."

But sometimes, institutional policies and outside accreditation requirements made it hard for teachers to use linguistically responsive assessments. There were some tensions because of professional programs that required English-language certification:

> "Engineering accreditation boards expect English proficiency. If I let students do their work in Bahasa Malaya, am I preparing them well enough? But making them speak only English punishes students who could show great engineering thinking in their first language."

Some teachers came up with new ways to test students that made language requirements go up slowly. This helped students learn both content and academic language:

> "In my first year, I'm more open to different languages. By my last year, I want academic English that meets international standards. This is language development that builds on itself, not lowered expectations."

Theme 3: Negotiating Institutional Language Policies and Pedagogical Innovation

Institutional language policies had a big impact on how participants taught, but the link between policy and practice was complicated and sometimes contradictory. At IIUM, lecturers talked about how they had to follow rules that required them to use Bahasa Malaya while also dealing with practical pressures to use English, especially in science and technology fields:

> "Officially, we should use Bahasa Malaya. But students need English for journal articles, conferences, and careers. I use Bahasa Malaya for lectures but English materials. It's complicated, and we're not always sure what's officially allowed versus what's pragmatically necessary."

IIUM lecturers, who mostly taught in English, said that the official focus on Arabic for Islamic studies made things harder for students who didn't speak Arabic, so they made informal adjustments:

> "Policy says Arabic for Quranic studies, but many students come with limited Arabic. We end up using English a lot, which isn't ideal but necessary. The policy doesn't fully take into account the language needs of the students."

Participants recognized institutional language policies as both facilitating and hindering pedagogical innovation. Some people thought that policies were necessary to make sure quality, while others thought that policies limited their professional freedom:

> "Clear language policy helps. We know what is expected of us and can plan accordingly. But strict enforcement makes it hard to adapt to different situations. Different fields and student groups need different approaches."

Several professors pushed for policies that are more flexible and based on principles that recognize real linguistic diversity instead of pushing for monolingual ideals:

> "Policy should prioritize learning outcomes, not language policing. If students learn effectively using multiple languages strategically, that should be acceptable. The goal is education, not linguistic purism."

A significant finding was that both universities provided little institutional support for professional development related to teaching in multilingual settings. Most of the people who took part said they learned how to do things by trying things out and making mistakes instead of through formal training:

> "We're supposed to teach a wide range of students well, but no one taught us how. I learned by watching my coworkers and trying things out. Professional development was mostly about technology or testing, not language teaching."

Theme 4: Professional Identity and Language Ideology Among Lecturers

A fourth important theme that came up was how language ideologies affect lecturers' professional identities and the choices they make about teaching. Participants possessed varying convictions regarding the connection between language and academic quality, which significantly impacted their instructional methodologies. Some professors said that English was necessary for academic rigor and being competitive on a global scale:

> One Professor from IIUM Physics said, "In science, English is the language of knowledge production. All major journals are in English. If we don't prepare students with strong English, we're limiting their futures. It's not about colonialism, it's about reality."

Some people were worried that teaching in English could push students who are good at Bahasa Malaya to the side, making language hierarchies that hurt some groups of people:

> One Professor from IIUM says, "When we put English first, we're saying that Bahasa Malaya isn't good enough for serious scholarship. That's a problem for a national university that wants to improve our language. Students shouldn't have to choose between their language and academic success."

A few teachers said they felt stuck between two language ideologies: valuing both English proficiency for job opportunities and Bahasa Malaya for national identity. This tension showed up in their teaching as they always had to decide which language to use in different situations:

> "I use English for technical content because terminology is standardized globally. But for conceptual discussions where students need to think deeply, I allow Bahasa Malaya. It's about matching language to purpose, not declaring one superior."

For Islamic studies professors at IIUM, Arabic was more than just a useful language; it was a way to connect with the Islamic scholarly tradition. But this made it hard to teach a group of international students with different backgrounds:

> "Arabic is necessary for real engagement with Islamic texts. But I can't require advanced Arabic when half my students come in without any. So I teach Arabic along with English translations, gradually building their language skills. It's practical, but some of my colleagues think it lowers standards."

Participants also talked about how language policies affected their professional standing and reputation. Several IIUM lecturers observed that publications in Bahasa Malaya garnered less institutional recognition compared to English publications, thereby discouraging the development of Malay academic discourse.

> "Promotion criteria emphasize international publications, which means English. If I write excellent scholarships in Bahasa Malaya for local journals, it counts less. The message is clear: English equals prestige. This undermines language development goals."

Some participants had formed hybrid professional identities, identifying as multilingual scholars who strategically utilize various linguistic resources:

> "I don't see myself as an English or Malay teacher. I'm an educator who uses whatever language works best for learning. My area of expertise is economics, and language is just a tool. Students need to learn how to speak more than one language, and I show them how."

The data showed that different generations have different ideas about language. Younger lecturers were more open to translanguaging and flexible language practices, but older faculty members sometimes worried that these methods showed a decline in standards:

> "When I started teaching 30 years ago, we had strict rules about how to use language. Now, younger teachers mix languages freely. They call it pedagogy, but I'm worried it's a lack of discipline. But students do seem interested, so maybe I'm old-fashioned."

Lastly, the people who took part realized that the languages they spoke had political meaning, especially when it came to national identity and linguistic fairness. Some people purposely used their teaching to promote linguistic diversity and question the idea that everyone should speak only one language.

> "Every time I validate students' use of multiple languages, I'm making a statement about what counts as legitimate academic practice. Language policies aren't neutral—they reflect power relations. My teaching is political, whether I acknowledge it or not."

9. DISCUSSION

The results of this study show how complicated the language situation is for Malaysian university lecturers daily. The results indicate that effective pedagogy in multilingual settings necessitates not only content expertise but also metalinguistic awareness, strategic language deployment, and ongoing negotiation between institutional policies and student needs. These results build on earlier studies of multilingual education and show how Malaysian higher education is different from other places. The discovery that lecturers view code-switching as an advanced pedagogical instrument rather than a deficient practice corresponds with translanguaging theory García and Li (2014) and contests conventional language separation methodologies. The participants' strategic alternation between languages to improve understanding, keep students interested, and recognize their multilingual identities is in line with recent research that supports flexible language use in schools Cenoz and Gorter (2020). The tension participants felt between pedagogical effectiveness and perceived academic rigor shows that monolingual ideas that see language mixing as a problem are still having an effect Canagarajah (2011).

The assessment challenges articulated by participants reflect overarching issues regarding construct validity in multilingual settings Shohamy (2011). When students are evaluated in languages other than their primary language, it becomes challenging to differentiate between content knowledge and language proficiency Menken (2008). Lecturers' adaptive strategies—such as providing multilingual prompts, permitting dictionary use, and offering language glossaries constitute pragmatic responses to this challenge, although institutional and accreditation constraints hindered their execution. This discovery indicates a necessity for clear institutional policies that endorse linguistically responsive assessment while upholding academic standards. A comparison of IIUM and IIUM shows how different institutional language policies affect teaching methods. IIUM's policy of teaching in English with Arabic for Islamic studies makes things harder for students who don't speak Arabic, which leads to unofficial accommodations. IIUM's shift from focusing on Bahasa Malaya to using more English, especially in science and technology, has made things unclear, and teachers have to deal with this in a practical way. Both situations show Spolsky (2004) difference between de jure and de facto language policies. In these cases, classroom practices often don't follow official rules because they need to.

The lack of professional development that focuses on multilingual pedagogy is a big problem. Lecturers formulated their strategies via trial and error instead of structured training, indicating that institutions presume language-conscious pedagogy emerges organically rather than necessitating particular competencies. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that content specialists frequently receive inadequate preparation for instructing linguistically diverse students Lucas and Villegas (2013). Considering Malaysia's linguistic diversity, it is imperative to focus on enhancing lecturers' proficiency in multilingual pedagogy. The fourth theme about professional identity and language ideology shows how people's beliefs affect the way policies and practices in the classroom work together. The participants' placement on the continuum between rigid language separation and adaptable translanguaging illustrates broader societal tensions in Malaysia concerning language, identity, and modernity. People who think English is important for academic rigor use ideas that connect language skills to intelligence, which Canagarajah (2011) calls linguistic imperialism. Conversely, proponents of Bahasa Malaya's legitimacy in higher education oppose such hierarchies, contending that academic quality supersedes language. The data shows that there are differences in language ideologies between generations, which suggests that how multilingualism is handled in schools is changing. Younger lecturers may

be more comfortable with translanguaging because they have had more multilingual education and have read more recent research that supports flexible language use. This generational change will affect the future of language-in-education policy because more and more new faculty members are taking on decision-making roles.

The results also show that there is tension between global and local pressures in Malaysian higher education. Lecturers have to find a balance between international academic standards, which are often linked to English proficiency, and their commitments to developing the national language and the language needs of their students. This tension mirrors broader dynamics in postcolonial contexts where English maintains instrumental value while local languages hold identity significance Canagarajah (1999). How professors deal with this tension has a big effect on fairness, access, and the quality of education. The institutional reward systems at IIUM that favor English publications over Bahasa Malaya scholarship show how policies can go against promises to support the development of the national language. When promotion criteria favor international visibility over local relevance, lecturers get mixed messages about what the school cares about most. This discrepancy between official language policy and informal reward structures exemplifies what Shohamy (2006) refers to as hidden language policies unwritten practices that may wield greater influence than formal mandates.

The study enhances applied linguistics scholarships by elucidating the implementation of multilingual pedagogies within institutional frameworks. Translanguaging theory offers a conceptual framework for comprehending flexible language practices; however, this research highlights the challenges of practical implementation and contextual limitations. Comprehending these fundamental realities is crucial for formulating language-in-education policies that facilitate rather than hinder effective teaching. This research further elucidates the role of language in facilitating knowledge construction within higher education. Participants' accounts of strategic code-switching to elucidate concepts, sustain engagement, and foster rapport illustrate that language selection entails complex pedagogical reasoning rather than mere convenience. This corresponds with Vygotsky (1978) assertion of language as a crucial instrument facilitating cognitive development, indicating that access to diverse linguistic resources may enhance rather than complicate learning processes. The assessment challenges identified in this study pose significant inquiries regarding construct validity and fairness that warrant additional scrutiny. When language proficiency complicates the evaluation of content knowledge, assessment becomes challenging, irrespective of its quality in other dimensions. Institutions must establish frameworks to discern when language is a relevant component of assessment and when it constitutes construct-irrelevant difficulty that unfairly disadvantages specific students.

10. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has significant ramifications for policy, practice, and subsequent research. First, schools should make clear, flexible language-in-education policies that recognize the fact that many people speak more than one language while still upholding academic standards. Instead of enforcing strict language separation, policies could offer principled frameworks for strategic multilingualism focused on learning outcomes. Such policies should differentiate between contexts in which stringent language requirements fulfill pedagogical objectives and scenarios where adaptability improves accessibility without sacrificing quality.

Second, professional development programs should make it clear that they will teach multilingual pedagogy. Lecturers require opportunities to cultivate metalinguistic awareness, acquire evidence-based methodologies for assisting linguistically diverse students, and engage in critical reflection on the language ideologies that shape their practice. Professional development like this could include workshops on translanguaging, assessment that is responsive to different languages, making course materials that work for all languages, and making it easier for everyone to talk in class.

Third, we need to think carefully about our assessment policies and practices again to make sure they test content knowledge and not just language skills. Institutions could formulate guidelines for language-supportive assessment, supply resources for the creation of accessible assessment tools, and delineate explicit criteria for determining when language proficiency is relevant to assessment versus when it signifies construct-irrelevant variance. Accreditation organizations should also think about how language requirements might unintentionally keep good students from getting in.

Fourth, the design of the curriculum should make it clear that language development is part of learning content. Instead of assuming that students will naturally acquire academic language proficiency, courses should explicitly focus

on disciplinary discourse, offer scaffolding for language development, and acknowledge that content and language learning are interconnected processes necessitating deliberate pedagogical emphasis.

Fifth, this research indicates the necessity for communities of practice wherein lecturers can exchange strategies, address challenges, and collaboratively cultivate culturally responsive multilingual pedagogies. These kinds of communities could work at the department, institution, or even national level. They would give people a place to talk about language-conscious teaching, which is mostly done on an individual and informal basis right now.

11. LIMITATIONS

When looking at these results, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, the data is based only on interviews with the lecturers themselves. Classroom observations would yield direct evidence of language practices, potentially uncovering inconsistencies between professed beliefs and actual practices. Nonetheless, self-report data elucidated lecturers' reasoning and meaning-making processes, offering significant insights into their conceptualization of pedagogical practices.

Second, the research concentrated on two universities in the Klang Valley, which may not encapsulate the entire diversity of Malaysian higher education. Different regions, types of schools, and groups of students may have different language situations and teaching problems. However, IIUM are important examples to compare because their language policies and missions are very different.

Third, this study lacks student perspectives. Future research ought to integrate student perspectives to comprehend their experiences with multilingual pedagogies, the language practices they perceive as beneficial or detrimental, and the impact of language policies on their learning. This kind of research would give us a better understanding of how multilingual teaching and learning works by giving us a different point of view from lecturers.

Fourth, although disciplinary differences were evident in the data, the sample size constrained a systematic analysis of how disciplines differentially influence language practices. More extensive studies could investigate whether translanguaging practices differ systematically among humanities, sciences, and professional programs, and whether specific disciplines pose unique linguistic challenges.

12. Conclusion

This qualitative comparative study shows that Malaysian university lecturers have to deal with complicated language issues that require advanced teaching skills. Instead of just following the rules set by the school, they act as policy arbiters who turn vague rules into specific classroom practices. Their strategic employment of multiple languages, the creation of linguistically responsive assessments, and the navigation of conflicting pressures illustrate that multilingual pedagogy constitutes a specialized field of expertise warranting explicit acknowledgment and support. The study enhances applied linguistics by elucidating the functioning of translanguaging theory within institutional frameworks, revealing both opportunities and limitations for adaptable multilingual practices. The findings contest monolingual ideologies that regard language separation as inherently superior, instead illustrating that strategic multilingualism can augment pedagogical effectiveness when applied intentionally and reflectively. This research underscores the necessity for more sophisticated language-in-education policies in Malaysian higher education that recognize multilingual realities while promoting quality. Instead of seeing linguistic diversity as a problem that needs to be managed, institutions could see it as a resource that makes learning more interesting. This kind of rethinking needs money for professional development, changes to how tests are given, and the building of school cultures that value and support language-conscious teaching. This study conclusively illustrates the intrinsic connection between language and learning in multilingual educational settings. The way institutions deal with linguistic diversity whether they see it as a problem or an opportunity, a lack or an asset has a big impact on the quality and fairness of education. Creating teaching methods that use multilingualism instead of just accepting it is important work for modern higher education, especially in places like Malaysia where language diversity is a key part of national identity and the education system.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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