



## Research Article

Sarah Hopkyns\* and Sender Dovchin

# Translanguaging and emotionality of English as a second language (ESL) teachers

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**Abstract:** Teaching is by no means ‘an emotion-free zone’, and teachers are often emotionally challenged in front of their students. When teaching and learning takes place via a second language, the emotional landscape of the classroom becomes especially charged. Often there is a notable gap between expected emotions or ‘emotional rules’ in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms and genuine emotions which results in ‘emotional labour’ for ESL teachers. Especially, ‘English only’ language policies and monolingual ideologies can lead ESL teachers and students to experience a range of emotions around authentic language use in the form of translanguaging. While research on students’ attitudes toward translanguaging has mushroomed in recent years, fewer studies have concentrated on the emotions of teachers in relation to translanguaging in the ESL classroom. To bridge this research gap, this study investigates six university teachers’ emotions related to translanguaging via semi-structured interviews in ESL classroom settings across three Asian countries (Mongolia, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates). The study revealed complex and conflicting teacher emotions around translanguaging including pride, comfort (related to feelings of safety), shame (related to linguistic inferiority complexes), guilt, and frustration. Based on the findings, practical recommendations are provided on the need for greater awareness and open dialogue on emotions in ESL classrooms for improved teacher and student wellness.

**Keywords:** translanguaging; teacher emotions; ESL classrooms; language policy; ideologies

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\*Corresponding author: Sarah Hopkyns, University of St Andrews, Fife, UK,

E-mail: [Slh29@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:Slh29@st-andrews.ac.uk). <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0152-4108>

Sender Dovchin, Curtin University, Perth, Australia, E-mail: [Sender.dovchin@curtin.edu.au](mailto:Sender.dovchin@curtin.edu.au).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4327-7096>

# 1 Introduction

Translanguaging, plurilingualism, translingual dispositions, and translingual practice amongst other ‘trans-concepts’ (Sun and Lan 2021), have received increasing attention from applied linguists over the last two decades with the emergence of the translingual turn in the 2010s (Hopkyns and Zoghbor 2022). Recent studies have explored various aspects of translanguaging in a wide range of educational contexts (Back 2020; Calafato 2022; Carroll 2022; Carroll and van den Hoven 2017; Hopkyns 2020, 2023; Hopkyns et al. 2018, 2021; Kim and Park 2019; Shi and Rolstad 2022; Tian and Lau 2022). The majority of previous studies have focused on attitudes toward translanguaging in classrooms with an emphasis mainly on student perspectives. Specific emotions such as ‘boredom’ (Shen 2022) and ‘linguistic shame’ (Hillman 2022) or feelings such as ‘hope’ (Hopkyns 2023) have been the focus of previous studies, mainly with student participants rather than teachers. Previous studies on teacher emotions tend to have a broad focus relating to English-medium education (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023) or identity (Song 2016). Other studies focus on certain aspects of language teaching which provoke strong emotions in teachers. For example, in Benesch’s (2017) book ‘Emotions and English Language Teaching’, teachers’ emotional labour is investigated primarily in relation to high-stakes literacy testing, responding to student writing, plagiarism, and attendance.

There is currently a scarcity of research looking specifically at teacher emotions related to translanguaging. An exception includes Nazari and Karimpour’s (2023) recent study in the context of Iran which investigated the connection between translanguaging and teacher emotions in terms of teachers’ proficiency-inflected emotion work and face-saving as an emotional undertaking. Here, translanguaging was found to be a multifaceted emotion-bearing policy (Nazari and Karimpour 2023). As ESL teacher emotions related to translanguaging have received little empirical attention to date, Nazari and Karimpour (2023) call for studies which further explore the ‘emotional landscape’ (Hillman et al. 2023) of translanguaging in ESL classrooms from the perspective of teachers in various global contexts. By exploring teacher emotions on translanguaging across three Asian contexts (Mongolia, Japan and the United Arab Emirates), this study directly responds to Nazari and Karimpour’s (2023) call. Moreover, the participants in the current study are not only located in three different contexts, but they also vary in terms of nationality (Mongolian, Korean, American, British and Lebanese). This extra layer of diversity presents a multinational landscape not previously covered in other studies. Paying closer attention to teacher emotions is important due to the interconnectivity between emotions and wellbeing. Furthermore, as teachers are often the starting point for successful learning outcomes for students (Her and De Costa 2022), teacher emotions also connect with students’ wellbeing and learning.

This article will start by discussing the key concepts relevant to the study: translanguaging, teacher emotions, emotional rules and emotional labour. The study will then be presented whereby six university teachers' emotions around translanguaging are investigated via semi-structured interviews in the three Asian ESL settings of Mongolia, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). After presenting and discussing the findings, the article will conclude with practical recommendations on ways in which greater awareness and open dialogue surrounding emotionality can be facilitated in ESL classrooms where translanguaging is a feature.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Translanguaging and emotions in ESL classrooms

The concept of translanguaging mainly problematises the classifying of language codes into separate categories (e.g., Arabic, English, Japanese, Mongolian, etc.) when, in fact, communication amongst multilinguals often involves making meaning through complex intertwined processes of semiotic resources, styles, genres, modes, and repertoires (Dovchin 2020; Lee 2022). Rather than using languages discretely or as multiple 'solitudes' (Cummins 2007), translanguaging sees multilingual speakers constantly engaging with the practice of fluid and creative re-adaptation of a wide array of semiotic resources available to them (Dovchin and Dryden 2022a, 2022b; Li 2018). Pedagogical translanguaging moves away from traditional approaches to language learning which aim to separate languages. Instead, translanguaging pedagogies "work to build on or complement the linguistic resources that students have in order to increase their linguistic competencies in a wide range of areas of communication" (Carroll 2022: 184). There is a growing body of research on translanguaging in educational settings, much of which focuses on practical applications of translanguaging and attitudes of stakeholders (Bak 2020; Calafato 2022; Carroll 2022; Carroll and van den Hoven 2017; Dovchin and Canagarajah 2019; Goodman and Tasthanbek 2023; Hopkyns et al. 2021; Kim and Park 2019; Tian et al. 2020). While stakeholder emotions surrounding translanguaging are often visible through the voicing of perspectives, few studies on translanguaging have made emotions an explicit focus.

In previous studies looking at attitudes toward translanguaging, it has been associated positively with strengthening bilingual and multilingual identities as well as aiding understanding and participation (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Tai and Wong 2022). Translanguaging has also been found to provide opportunities for L2 learners to appreciate their first language (L1) in the classroom while simultaneously learning their target language (Menken and Sánchez 2019). Using full linguistic repertoires in his sense, eases linguistic pressure by providing flexibility for ESL

learners to be more liberated in the classroom (Dovchin 2021), leading to greater participation in classroom activities (Li and Hua 2013). Emotions such as pride and joy stemming from “playfulness”, “creativity” (Li and Hua 2019) and the “pleasure of doing things differently” (Pennycook 2007: pp. 41–42) as well as opportunities to create a third space (Bhabha 1994) or safe space (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Sayer 2013) are also often connected with translanguaging.

On the other hand, due to dominant monolingual ideologies, ‘English only’ policies and/or monolingual expectations in many ESL contexts globally, emotions connected to translanguaging are not purely positive, but often complex and conflicting. Previous studies in English-medium instruction (EMI) settings have reported on the precariousness of translanguaging in terms of its lack of acceptance and legitimization in formal contexts (Hopkyns and Sultana 2024) as well as the unequalness of translanguaging across social classes (Sah and Li 2022) and linguistic groups (Kuteeva 2020). Although translanguaging is natural and ordinary for multilinguals (Dovchin and Izadi 2023), it is often looked down upon in educational settings due to ingrained ideological divides between languages such as the belief that the L1 belongs in the home domain and the L2 (often English) belongs in the educational domain (Hopkyns and Elyas 2022). This was found to be the case in many of the Gulf countries where students in EMI universities often use full linguistic repertoires but emotions of ‘guilt’ and its sister emotion ‘shame’ accompany such practice due to beliefs that only one language should be used at a time (Al-Bataineh and Gallagher 2021; Hillman 2022; Hopkyns et al. 2021; Palfreyman and Al-Bataineh 2018). Lack of legitimization for translanguaging can be seen in many EMI and ESL contexts globally via an emphasis on monolingual ‘English only’ assessments, educationscapes (Krompák et al. 2022) and faculty research output. For example, in the context of Quetta, Pakistan signage appearing in private schools stating ‘Don’t speak local languages’ (Manan et al. 2014) affect both teacher and student emotions around translanguaging leading to guilt, shame and a sense of transgression around such practice.

## 2.2 Conceptualizing emotions, emotional rules, and emotional labour

As Martin and Lueckenhausen (2005) point out, teaching is by no means “an emotion-free zone” and teachers can be emotionally challenged in front of their students (p. 410). In particular, teachers in language classrooms may experience additional emotional challenges during classroom interactions due to language policies and expectations as well as language ideologies around translanguaging. Before looking at the emotional landscape of language teachers as it relates to translanguaging practice, it is necessary to theorise the following key concepts: emotions, emotional rules and emotional labour.

Emotions can be defined as physical manifestations or responses to an event or phenomenon (Barrett 2017). Emotions differ from feelings as the latter refer to mental associations and reactions to an emotion (Barrett 2017; Gkonou et al. 2020). Rather than taking a *biological approach* to theorising emotions whereby emotions are viewed as innate with everyone experiencing them in the same way regardless of context, culture, and background, we take a *poststructuralist approach* (Ahmed 2004; Benesch 2017) to theorising emotions whereby emotions are recognised as differing according to people's individual histories, social identities, cultural contexts and power (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023). In line with poststructuralist approaches, we avoid placing emotions into polarised 'positive' and 'negative' categories, and instead recognise that emotions are often complex, changeable and closely connected to social environment (Gkonou et al. 2020).

In certain professions such as teaching, there are considerable expectations placed around which emotions are appropriate to display. Expected displays of emotion according to context are known as 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1979) or 'emotional rules' (Zembylas 2002), whereby certain emotions are considered appropriate in a specific role such as that of a teacher. There is immense pressure for teachers to follow emotional rules such as positivity, liveliness, happiness and patience (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023). When the pressure to follow emotional rules conflicts with genuine emotions, individuals experience 'emotional labour'. Emotional labour can be defined as 'the commodification of emotional management' (Benesch 2017: 41), whereby emotional work essentially becomes an aspect of a paid job. Song (2016) equates emotional labour with 'emotional vulnerability' which she defines as the large gap between 'what teachers try to feel' by recognising their professional status and 'what teachers actually feel' in practice. According to Song (2016), "this gap leads to a stage performance in which teachers mask their experienced emotions and express expected emotions that are considered legitimate in a given context" (p. 633). Emotions experienced but masked during stage performance may include frustration, anger, and anxiety.

Previous research has found heightened emotions in both students and teachers in ESL classrooms as well as in English-medium university social spaces (Benesch 2017; De Costa et al. 2020; Ding and Benesch 2018; Hillman 2022; Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023; Liyanage 2023; Resnik and Dewaele 2020; Sah 2023; Şahan and Şahan 2023; Yuan et al. 2023). Cowie (2011) highlights that with large classes in Japanese universities, ESL teachers often work hard to maintain a close rapport with their students by being friendly and personable through sharing personal stories and humour. However, such efforts to build a pleasant classroom ambience and teacher-student relationships often contrast with other emotions which teachers' feel they cannot display in the classroom, such as anxiety, insecurity and frustration. This in turn results in emotional labour. Furthermore, in the case of Kocabas-Gedlik and Ortaç-tepe-Hart's (2021) longitudinal study with two native English-speaking teachers in a

Turkish university, factors such as educational background, competence in local language, and supportive discourses at work led to different types of emotional labour, which contributed to their investment and participation in communities of practice. In this sense, emotional labour was “interwoven with notions of investment, burnout, communities of practice and teacher identity at large” (Kocabas-Gedik and Ortaçtepe-Hart 2021: 103). To summarise, for ESL and EMI teachers, emotions fluctuate with teachers regularly experiencing emotional labour or vulnerability in relation to a range of factors including disparities between emotional rules around patience and pleasantness, and genuine emotions of frustration and disappointment related to a range of factors including language use, linguistic struggles, plagiarism, attendance and giving feedback (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023; Miller and Gkonou 2018). In the following section, we turn to the social context and methodology for the current study which focuses on teacher emotions relating to translanguaging in three Asian ESL contexts.

### 3 The current study – methodology and social context

#### 3.1 Study aim and research questions

The current study is based on a larger research project investigating translanguaging practice, emotions and identities of stakeholders (ESL teachers, content teachers, and students) in English-medium education across multiple global contexts. The larger study began in 2019 and is ongoing. For this article, we focus on ESL teacher emotions relating to translanguaging in the three Asian contexts of Mongolia, Japan and the UAE. The study addresses two main research questions:

**RQ1:** What emotions do ESL teachers experience in their classrooms in relation to translanguaging?

**RQ2:** Do ESL teachers’ experience emotion labour related to translanguaging in their classrooms? If so, how do they navigate such emotions?

We used a multiple case study approach, which allows for the complexity of real-life events to be captured and described (Yin 2014). A key characteristic of the case study approach is the inclusion of multiple data sources. Thus, in our larger study, we collected data via classroom observations of language use, interviews, surveys, documents, and researcher journals. In this article we focus on our data from semi-structured interviews with six ESL teachers (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Participant information.

#	Pseudonyms	Nationality	Age	Gender	Workplace	L1	LX
1	Erdene	Mongolian	30–35	Female	Primary School in Mongolia	Mongolian	English (proficient) Russian (basic)
2	Otgoo	Mongolian	40–45	Female	University in Mongolia	Mongolian	English (proficient) Russian and Kazakh (basic)
3	Sujin	South Korean	40–45	Female	University in Japan	Korean	English (proficient) Japanese (basic)
4	Paul	British	40–45	Male	University in Japan	English	Japanese (advanced) French (basic)
5	Michael	American	50–55	Male	University in the UAE	English	Arabic (basic) Spanish (basic)
6	Noura	Lebanese	40–45	Female	University in the UAE	Arabic, French	English (proficient)

### 3.2 Participants' linguistic backgrounds and educational contexts

The participants in the study include six ESL teachers from three Asian contexts: Mongolia, Japan, and the UAE. Details regarding sampling and the participants' social context and linguistic backgrounds can be seen in Table 1 and in the following paragraphs.

The two Mongolian ESL-teacher participants (Erdene and Otgoo) were based in Australia at the time of the study (2021–2022). They were both in Australia to pursue postgraduate degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) but for the purpose of the study, they were asked to reflect upon emotions on translanguaging with reference to their former ESL teaching contexts in Mongolia. They were chosen as participants due to their shared linguistic background with the second researcher (Sender) allowing the interviews to be conducted in their L1 of Mongolian and translated into English. Erdene taught Mongolian students English in a primary school and Otgoo taught ESL classes in a Mongolian university to mainly Mongolian students. After completing her Master's degree, Erdene plans to go back to Mongolia and resume her ESL job and Otgoo is unsure of her next move. Both Mongolian participants are bilingual in Mongolian and English, as well as speaking basic Russian and basic Kazakh in Otgoo's case.

The two Japan-based teachers were chosen as participants in the study as both researchers' had access to former colleagues based in Japan due to having both previously lived and worked there. The first Japan-based teacher in the study was Sujin from Korea. She has taught English in a Japanese university for just under five years. She has a PhD degree in TESOL from a US university and started working in Japan after her graduation. Sujin is bilingual in Korean and English but speaks only basic Japanese. The second Japan-based participant was Paul from the UK. He moved to Japan twenty years ago. He started working in a private ESL school and then after gaining his DELTA and Masters' degree from a UK university, moved to teach ESL at an English-medium university. His wife is Japanese and he speaks English, Japanese and basic French. Almost all Sujin and Paul's students have Japanese as their L1.

The two UAE-based teacher participants were Michael and Noura. They were colleagues of the first researcher (Sarah), and were invited to be participants via purposive sampling due to their experience and differing linguistic backgrounds. Michael is from the USA. He has an MA in TESOL from an American university. He has lived and worked in Abu Dhabi, UAE for just over 10 years, most of which included teaching English in a foundation programme (ESL and EAP) at a government university. His L1 is English and he speaks basic Arabic and Spanish. Noura is from Lebanon and she arrived in the UAE 12 years ago with an MA in Applied Linguistics. She taught ESL and EAP in a government university foundation programme for eight years. She now teaches English composition courses at the same university. She is trilingual in Arabic, French and English. As almost 90 % of the UAE's population are transnational residents, the majority of English teachers (and other teachers) are from overseas. Michael and Noura are typical UAE-based English teachers in terms of their transnational backgrounds. The students they teach are Emirati with Arabic as their L1.

### 3.3 Data collection and ethics

Since all six ESL teachers were familiar with the concept of translanguaging and had tried to apply/or had applied translanguaging in their ESL classroom practices, interview questions were directly geared towards their emotions related to using translanguaging. Participants were asked to reflect on their use of translanguaging/lack of translanguaging and emotions related to this practice. They were asked to provide examples of 'emotional critical incidents' (Derakhshan and Nazari 2022) such as transformative events as well as their common everyday emotional experiences related to translanguaging. The semi-structured interviews took place over a two-year period from 2021 to 2023 at times convenient to the participants. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour, and mainly took place via Zoom.



In the case of the two Mongolian teachers, the interviews were conducted via telephone due to issues of access. The interview questions were sent out via email prior to interviews to allow time and opportunities for the participants to carefully reflect and recall their previous teaching experiences in their particular contexts.

The interviews with the Mongolian participants were conducted in Mongolian by the second researcher (Sender). The interviews with both Japan-based teachers were conducted in English (one with the first researcher and one with the second researcher), as this was a shared language between both researchers and participants. The interviews with the UAE-based participants were conducted in English by the first researcher (Sarah), although Noura used some Arabic which was translated. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, the interviews were shared with the participants to confirm that their responses were accurate.

The study gained ethical approval from both researchers' universities. All participants received a participant information sheet (aims, objectives, ethical concerns, and researchers' contact information), consent forms, and an overview of the research project in digital form. Following established ethical procedures, all participants were given the opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the research project. For the reporting of the data, all participants have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

### 3.4 Researcher positionality

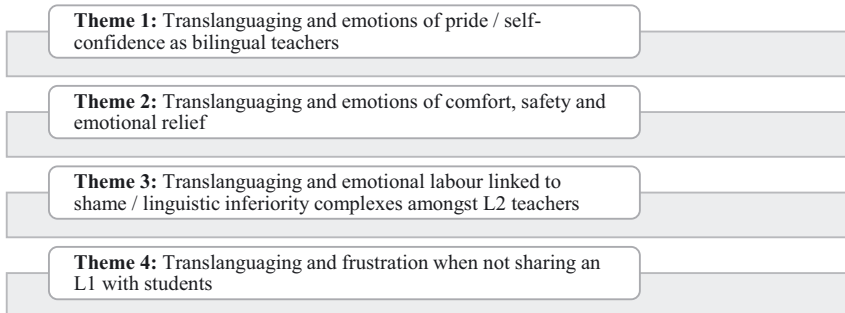
As Creswell (2007) points out, researcher positionality is essential to discuss in qualitative research, as the researchers' engagement with contextual particularities shapes and influences the interpretation of the data. In this study, the researchers both collected the data from international colleagues in the UAE and Japan (first researcher) and Mongolia and Japan (second researcher). We had insider roles with most of the participants we interviewed in terms of L1, occupation and familiarity with the educational context. When jointly analysing the data set, we had outsider roles regarding some participants' experiences. For example, the Mongolian context was unfamiliar to the first researcher and the UAE context was unfamiliar to the second researcher. We had a shared familiarity with the Japanese education context through previous work experience. This provided us with 'life capital' as researchers (Consoli 2022) which enriched our understanding of the participants' experiences. As Derakhshan and Nazari (2022) point out, having 'collegial ties' with participants can facilitate the sharing of emotions due to pre-established trust and familiarity. We shared the interview data with each other (after translation) and we engaged in joint discussion when analysing the data and writing this article.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The data (six semi-structured interviews lasting between 40 minutes to one hour) were analysed via thematic analysis (TA). Braun and Clarke (2006) conceptualize TA as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Six stages of coding were used: (1) familiarizing ourselves with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and labelling themes, and (6) reporting the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). To authentically represent the data in the participants’ own words, we identified representative quotes to demonstrate the teachers’ emotions relating to key identified themes.

## 4 Findings: translanguaging and ESL teacher emotionality

From our thematic analysis of the six interviews with ESL teachers across three Asian educational contexts on the topic of emotions and translanguaging, four key themes were identified (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** ESL teacher emotions relating to translanguaging – four key themes.

The following subsections will explore the themes in Figure 1 with participant quotes and analysis.

### 4.1 Theme 1: translanguaging and emotions of pride/self-confidence as bilingual teachers

The first key theme in the data set relates to the emotion of pride, which is connected with improved self-confidence when utilizing translanguaging in the classroom. For

example, Erdene stated that she often used translanguaging in her classrooms and it helped her teaching in many ways and allowed her self-confidence to grow, which triggered the related emotions of comfort, joy, happiness and accomplishment.

**Extract 1:**

*I started feeling comfortable when we started using translanguaging. That is, using Mongolian and English. It gave me a chance to just stand and talk with my students. My students started asking questions because I gave them the opportunity to just talk. But if I did tasks in English, they started becoming more enjoyable, and I seemed to get genuine interactions from students. My confidence level was boosted so highly as a result. I started feeling joyful and happy and rewarded. (Erdene, Mongolian ESL teacher).*

Similarly, Paul felt emotions of pride and accomplishment when he utilized translanguaging in his ESL classroom with Japanese students (Extract 2). His initial reason for translanguaging was to help students understand difficult English concepts but he commented that a side effect of this practice was improved teacher-student rapport and added respect from his students. He questioned whether he would feel the same set of positive emotions if Japanese were his first language, however.

**Extract 2:**

*If I see my students struggling with a concept in English, I usually try and use my Japanese to help them. I also use drawings on the board. Students sometimes seem surprised that I can speak Japanese well and they seem to give me more respect and our relationship improves. This makes me feel proud as a bilingual teacher. I sometimes wonder if they'd feel the same way if I were a Japanese teacher using the L1 in an English class though. I think they welcome me speaking Japanese partly because I'm making an effort and moving outside my comfort zone. (Paul, British ESL teacher in Japan).*

Paul's comment in Extract 2 draws attention to the connection between translanguaging, emotions and the linguistic identity of teachers. Such positivity around translanguaging seen in Extracts 1 and 2 is often transient. In Erdene's case, when she shifted back toward a monolingual teaching approach, her level of confidence declined leading to emotions such as fear and anxiety. When analysing her fluctuating emotions related to translanguaging versus monolingual approaches to teaching, she concluded that sustainable repetition of translanguaging was the only way forward for her (Extract 3).

**Extract 3:**

*When I tried to switch back to an English-only teaching method, my self-confidence started to wear me down again. My fear and anxiety started to overwhelm me. So, I had to repeat translanguaging again as a sustainable practice in my classroom to encourage more holistic interaction in the classroom. (Erdene, Mongolian ESL teacher).*

In Extract 3, Erdene demonstrates how her increased confidence could only be maintained through repeating translanguaging as a sustainable resource rather than a one-off experience.

## 4.2 Theme 2: translanguaging and emotions of comfort, safety and emotional relief

A second key theme identified in the data set includes a ‘feeling of safety’ connected with translanguaging. Such a finding is complicit with previous studies, in which translanguaging is often deemed a ‘safe house’ (Canagarajah 2017) or a ‘safe space’ (Dryden et al. 2021). For example, in Extract 4, Otgoo refers to translanguaging in terms of its significant impact in creating an emotionally safe space in the classroom when she is teaching.

### Extract 4:

*Using Mongolian and English and sometimes even Kazakh creates warmth, connection, emotional affinity, and spaces for relief for me. My Kazakh students feel safe when they are given the opportunity to use Kazakh in the classroom. I feel safe when I use, for example, Mongolian because I know exactly what I am trying to explain in English. Sometimes, I find it difficult to explain certain concepts in English, and my students look so confused. However, when I explain in Mongolian, I feel safe because I know they understand what I mean. You know, your first language is such a comfort, and I feel safe because I know even if I find it difficult to describe in English, I know I can always go back to my first language. (Otgoo, Mongolian ESL teacher).*

In Extract 4, Otgoo explains that she tries to give an opportunity not only to her Mongolian students to speak Mongolian but also, she supports the use of the Kazakh language in the classroom when she interacts with her Kazakh students. Using her L1, Mongolian, eases the pressure of having to always respond only in English, providing her with a ‘safe space’ (Dovchin 2022) instead of being inhibited by having to use only English (Menken and Sánchez 2019).

In the context of the UAE where Emirati students’ first language is Arabic, Noura, who also speaks Arabic as an L1, explains similar emotions of comfort in using the L1 in her ESL classroom. Although she recognises translanguaging as a comfy and safe space, she speaks of this practice as if it is a ‘guilty pleasure’ which is easy to ‘slip into’ but implies it is also a sort of vice which should be monitored and reduced (Extract 5).

### Extract 5:

*It’s a comfy feeling to use some Arabic in my classroom because my students also speak Arabic as their first language. It is easy and comfortable to slip into Arabic but I try not to do it too much. It’s an English course so I should mainly use English for them to improve their target language. (Noura, Lebanese ESL teacher in the UAE)*

In Extract 5, Noura's views on translanguaging may be connected to 'English only' expectations at her EMI university. Here, we see a difference between policy and practice, leading to the emotion of guilt over transgressing policies and expectations. This is also the case in Otgoo's account in the following section, related to shame.

### 4.3 Theme 3: translanguaging and emotional labour linked to shame and linguistic inferiority complexes amongst L2 teachers

Emotions of shame related to linguistic inferiority complexes amongst teachers whose first language was not English was the third key theme identified in the data set. For example, Otgoo, who has Mongolian as her L1, explained that despite translanguaging being a 'safe space', she also often feels emotionally vulnerable and self-conscious in the classroom when she utilizes translanguaging (Extract 6).

#### Extract 6:

*I do use both English and Mongolian in the classroom sometimes when I feel that my students need more detailed explanations in Mongolian. After all, English is not my first language. I want to make sure my students understand all content and everything I have said in English. So, I use Mongolian sometimes to convey my message fully. Even though it feels safe in some ways, every time I do it, I also feel vulnerable and ashamed of myself. I feel like I don't know enough English to explain everything to my students, so I choose Mongolian instead. This makes me feel really self-conscious sometimes. (Otgoo, Mongolian ESL teacher).*

In Extract 6, Otgoo's emotions represent a 'linguistic inferiority complex' which is negative internalised psychological and emotional traits such as self-consciousness, self-shame, and self-degrading that may emerge when one finds oneself in a condition where one's linguistic abilities and skills are often judged by other people (Tankosić et al. 2021). Otgoo further explains that she experiences conflicting emotions when she uses translanguaging in the classroom because she feels that she is not conforming to the language policy of the university, which advocates for 'English-only' instruction (Extract 7).

#### Extract 7:

*When I use translanguaging, I kind of feel so bad and guilty sometimes. Really self-conscious and inferior. Because I know I'm going against the language policy of the school. All English teachers need to use as much English as possible in the classroom and avoid using Mongolian. This gives me another anxiety and stress. (Otgoo, Mongolian ESL teacher).*

Otgoo's description here reminds us of Her and De Costa's (2022) point on how language teacher emotions may intersect with language policy and how teachers are forced to navigate a set of rules regarding how they should feel (emotional rules) at the workplace imposed by a specific language policy. In Otgoo's case, 'emotional rules' place expectations on teachers to only use English in their ESL classrooms and to do so in a confident manner. In contrast with such emotional rules, Otgoo chooses to use translanguaging to help students understand difficult concepts but feels ashamed, self-conscious, and inferior about this practice resulting in considerable emotional labour when masking genuine emotions. In this sense, language policies may accrue emotional capital or embodied emotions through unequal power relations between the institution and teachers as well as through daily interaction with students (Dovchin and Dryden 2022a, 2022b).

In Extract 8, Otgoo tries to manage the conflicting emotions she has around translanguaging by telling herself that translanguaging is 'normal' and 'OK, sometimes'. Her management of negative emotions gave way to other emotions, namely empathy, that led her to accumulate valuable emotional capital and, in fact, normalised her negative emotions. Such emotional capital, in turn, according to Her and De Costa (2022), enables teachers to manage the work-related emotional difficulties that they encounter.

**Extract 8:**

*As an English teacher, I do understand the language policy of our university. Because we don't have much English-speaking environment and naturally, they want us to speak English only. I understand that. However, I would have to use translanguaging anyway. It comes naturally, too. So, I would have to tell myself what I'm doing is normal. It is okay, sometimes."* (Otgoo, Mongolian ESL teacher).

In line with Otgoo's emotions of shame related to translanguaging in the face of her university's English-only policy, Noura also commented on emotions of unease and self-consciousness when 'over-using' translanguaging (Extract 9).

**Extract 9:**

*I don't want to over-use translanguaging as my university is an English-medium institution. I feel embarrassed if my students and colleagues see me relying too much on Arabic. I try to avoid that.* (Noura, Lebanese ESL teacher in the UAE)

Noura's comment in Extract 9 relates to emotions of self-consciousness and embarrassment around 'relying on' the L1 in her ESL classroom. By avoiding translanguaging, Noura employs a 'face-saving' strategy, even though she can see the benefits of the practice.

#### 4.4 Theme 4: translanguaging and frustration when not sharing an L1 with students

A fourth, and final, theme from the data revealed that frustration was a common emotion experienced in ESL teachers who did not share the same L1 as their students. For example, Sujin, who has Korean as her first language and only has basic Japanese, explained that she often felt frustrated in her ESL classroom as she could not utilize translanguaging with her Japanese students. She felt that students' understanding would be aided if she could use translanguaging (English and Japanese) to help convey her full message (Extract 10).

##### **Extract 10:**

*Sometimes my students become so non-responsive when I speak only English. They just looked at me as if they did not understand anything. In that case, I would really want to use translanguaging. For example, Japanese and English both. Because I don't speak Japanese, I have no choice but to speak English. I end up being so frustrated because I'm not able to explain fully what I wanted to explain and end up explaining over and over in English. (Sujin, Korean ESL teacher based in Japan).*

Sujin describes feeling frustrated when she finds difficulties in explaining specific assignments to students and having to repeatedly explain instructions in English without much success. Failing to convey information to students due to linguistic barriers can lead to emotions such as impotency or ineptitude. In Sujin's case the primary emotion expressed was frustration due to the inaccessibility of translanguaging.

Michael also expressed similar emotions in relation to the inaccessibility of translanguaging as a classroom strategy for him as a non-Arabic speaker teaching in the UAE context (Extract 11).

##### **Extract 11:**

*I've lived in the UAE for over 10 years but it's hard to learn Arabic here. English is everywhere and my job is demanding. I don't have extra time to give to learning Arabic. It can be problematic not speaking Arabic because there are so many instances where I wish I could just give an easy translation in Arabic instead of finding endless ways to say the same thing in English. It's exhausting and thankless if students don't understand what you're trying to say. Of course, you can't let these emotions show, and that in itself is a hard part of the job. (Michael, American ESL teacher based in the UAE).*

In Extract 11, Michael experiences frustration but this emotion has to be masked due to 'emotional rules' surrounding the display of unacceptable emotions, resulting in emotional labour. Michael goes on to explain emotions of 'powerlessness' as a teacher not sharing his students' L1 as well as discussing strategies he employs to manage such emotions (Extract 12).

**Extract 12:**

*When students use translanguaging for group work I sometimes feel out of control or powerless. I don't necessarily know what they are discussing. They could be discussing the weekend or anything else. If students benefit from translanguaging to properly discuss topics, then I don't want to enforce only English in my classroom. (Michael, American ESL teacher based in the UAE).*

Similar to Sujin, despite his own complex emotions around the inaccessibility of translanguaging, Michael ultimately shows empathy for his students and recognises the benefits of translanguaging such as fuller participation.

## 5 Discussion

Findings revealed complex and conflicting teacher emotions connected with translanguaging. Emotions tended to relate to teachers' linguistic identities and social context, including institutional language policies. Rather than teacher emotions falling into binary positive and negative categories, emotions fluctuated and varied according to interactions, ideologies and linguistic dynamics.

With regard to RQ1, the six ESL teachers in the study – Ergene, Ootgo, Sujin, Paul, Michael and Noura – discussed a wide range of emotions related to translanguaging including pride, self-confidence, comfort, safety, relief, guilt, shame, embarrassment, frustration, powerlessness, and self-consciousness. The 'feeling of safety' teacher participants discussed in relation to translanguaging is consistent with what Canagarajah (2017) defined as 'in-group translanguaging'. When free of surveillance, translanguaging can provide 'safe houses' where speakers are free from the external pressure of using only English. Translanguaging as a safe space encourages the full linguistic repertoire of L2 teachers, which allows emotional affinity, and spaces of relief during interactions. As Dryden et al. (2021) state, 'translanguaging as emotional safe spaces' can induce emotions of comfort which empower users by providing them with emotional affinity. Although some participants reported comfort and increased self-confidence as bilingual teachers when utilizing translanguaging, the findings mostly revealed a mix of emotions. The complex mix of emotions found in the present study differs from some previous studies which focus on translanguaging as overwhelmingly positive in its function as a transformational tool for teaching and learning as well as a way of strengthening authentic linguistic identities.

In relation to RQ2, findings revealed tensions between emotional rules (the emotions teachers were expected to display) and genuine emotions, which resulted in emotional labour for many of the participants. This tension often related to 'English-only' policies/expectations/ideologies and translanguaging practice. Especially for



teachers who shared the same L1 as their students, translanguaging was common and natural but emotions often related to guilt, shame and linguistic inferiority complexes (Tankosić et al. 2021). Otgoo and Noura, in particular, commented on how translanguaging led them to feel linguistically inferior with emotions of guilt, embarrassment, shame, and lack of credibility related to not complying with monolingual pressures and rules in their institutions. Previous studies have revealed linguistic inferiority complexes related to ‘non-native-English-speaking teacher’ (NNEST) identities resulting in anxiety (Cowie 2011), insecurity (Wolff and De Costa 2017), frustration (Morris and King 2018) and uncertainty (De Costa et al. 2018). Such studies focused more generally on teacher emotions, however, without specifically looking at the connection between linguistic inferiority complexes and translanguaging. Findings from the current study thus offer fresh insights specifically into common emotions amongst NNESTs relating to translanguaging.

A further finding not often discussed in previous literature relates to the emotional labour experienced by teachers’ who did not share an L1 with the students they were teaching (Sujin and Michael). Both Sujin and Michael discussed emotions around the inaccessibility of translanguaging and emotions of powerlessness and frustration which arose. The feeling of frustration arose specifically in relation to their inability to utilize translanguaging because of not having the linguistic resources. Although Sujin and Michael expressed frustration, there was an acceptance that displaying these emotions was inappropriate in their role as teachers. Instead both Sujin and Michael attempted to manage and normalize their negative feelings by showing empathy for their students. Similar notions of developing empathy towards policies/rules and normalising negative emotions were also found in Her and De Costa’s (2022) study.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the study’s findings, two practical recommendations can be made: (1) Greater awareness of complex teacher emotions surrounding translanguaging in ESL classrooms; (2) Open dialogue on emotions in ESL classrooms and in continuing professional development (CPD) sessions for improved teacher and student empathy and wellness.

Firstly, greater recognition of complex emotions and emotional labour in ESL contexts is needed. As Hopkyns and Gkonou (2023) note, “from a political perspective, drawing attention to the twin concepts of emotional rules and emotional labour allows the clashes between the two concepts to be observed” (p. 9). By revealing the often large gap between how teachers are ‘expected to feel’ (emotional rules) and the effort it takes to manage or mask genuine feelings (emotional labour), problematic institutional beliefs such as ‘English-only policies’ can be addressed (Benesch 2019).

Too often translanguaging is seen as only connected to playfulness and creativity without considering more complex emotions attached to the practice, which can be precarious (Dovchin et al. 2024). We, thus, encourage researchers to further explore complexities within teacher emotionality in a range of global contexts and to consider translanguaging as inducing more than simply pleasant emotions for both students and teachers.

Secondly, rather than emotions being viewed as internal and as something to be ‘worked through’ individually as part of ‘self-care’, there is a need for post-structuralist approaches to be embraced. Here, it is recognised that emotions differ according to people’s individual histories, social identities, cultural contexts and power (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023). As Park and Ramirez (2022) recognise, when teachers are emotionally drained, students can feel it too, which can cause negative emotions for both students and teachers. Thus, when discussing teacher emotions, it is essential to recognise that teachers and their students share a reciprocal emotional relationship. Just as affective struggles in students may be related to educational backgrounds, social context and low English proficiency (Sah 2023), intersecting aspects of teacher identities can result in a range of complex emotions which can be entangled as well as fluctuating (Hopkyns and Gkonou 2023). Opening up discussions on language use in classrooms can promote empathy and understanding. For example, the restrictions students may feel when their L1 is not permitted in the classroom is articulated by an Iranian student in Piller et al.’s (forthcoming) book ‘Life in a new language’ who stated she felt she had a ‘big lock’ on her lips when communicating solely through English. Students voicing such emotions can help teachers see the benefits of translanguaging despite possible emotions of exclusion and powerlessness, in the case of Sujin and Michael. Open dialogues on emotions and language use in ESL classrooms as well as in continuing professional development (CPD) sessions are necessary to release emotional tension and initiate change with the aim of improved teacher (and student) empathy and wellness.

Finally, it should be recognised that this study was small in scale as only six language teacher participants were interviewed. For further research, it would be valuable to include a larger sample of teachers as well as to investigate the emotions of teacher educators and content teachers. This would allow for comparisons to be drawn across different types of teachers as well as across context-specific settings in diverse geographical areas. Including further data collection tools such as observations and narrative frames would also enrich future data sets.

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