

## Efficacy of Translanguaging in a Phonetics Classroom: A Study on the Budding Engineers

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### Abstract

'Exclusive English classroom can help students study EFL courses' is a myth. There are objections to this immersive method, especially for the 1<sup>st</sup> year B.Tech Engineering students in Phonetics classroom teaching. Several studies have justified that L2 learners of English tend to confuse Native language letters and English letters and Translanguaging lays the theoretical foundation for linguistic research in EFL class. This research takes place in one small class of 1<sup>st</sup> year B.Tech (CSE) in a Telangana Private University. The class was divided into Exclusive English and an Experimental English class where Telugu language (25%) was infused to teach English. The experiments were carried out for 4 months through different phonetic activities based on LSRW. The result of the research showed that application of translanguage helped the students a lot. In Experimental class students could sort out the confusion between the two pronunciation of Telugu letters and English letters, and the 75 % English plus 25% Telugu model (EG-MT) model used by the author proved to be a winner. In the experimental class, they are encouraged to synthesize listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English citing examples of Telugu. This research shows that using EG+MT model is more effective than exclusive English class to learn the sounds of English.

Keywords: Translanguaging English Telugu Phonetics Language Teaching Engineering

### Introduction

The first theoretical guidance for this study came from Cenoz & Gorter's, (2015) take on translanguaging. Translanguage has both expanding and narrowing meanings. The former is code transfer, code meshing, etc. translation; the latter is a specific teaching strategy (Lewis et al., 2013). Cross-language is flexible in bilingual Teaching and Learning. In Bilingual classes, the instructional strategies teachers use to facilitate are Language transfer, expressing ideas and developing multilingualism identity, Blackledge & Creese (2010) and Chris & Blackledge, (2010) think that flexible pedagogy is very important for learners of different society, culture, community and language domains. Translanguaging for Bilingual learners are at the heart of the interaction and language is used as a social resource without making it limited. The future Engineers have to be industry ready and communication is the key to their success. In communication, having good pronunciation is a mandate. The L2 learners of the English language need effective ways to learn the nuances of English phonetics in a simple and effective way and translanguaging is one such way.

### Importance of phonetics in language learning

We are living in a world of connectivity where communication is the key to success. When it comes to communication, it is the English language which is used worldwide. The progression in science and technology contributes to the necessity of handling English with great fluency. Good command over the English language is not only important in a students' scholastic life but also for their prospective careers. And how can we ignore Phonetics when we are discussing about communication.

Phonetics is a crucial domain of communication. But unfortunately, EFL teachers commonly overlook pronunciation. However, it is crucial since poor pronunciation can impede communication and make it difficult to transmit messages. This can be annoying for learners. By combining phonemic awareness, phonics teaching helps learners become more conscious of their surroundings and better able to associate sounds with letters. In communication, both written and spoken, the grammar and rules should be followed for an effective result. In spoken form, phonetics put forward the rules of pronunciation. If the sounds are not pronounced accurately, the content as well as our communication will lack lustre and sound unimpressive. According to Chavangklang (2013) miscommunication occurs if students fail to pronounce English words accurately. Hahn's (2004) research on primary stress and intelligibility states that native speakers of English make less effort to understand non-native speakers' discourse with correct primary stress. Thus, perfection in pronunciation helps listeners comprehend the speech made by non-native speakers of English. Unfortunately, Phonetics teaching is often neglected in English classrooms around the world and in India the scenario is worse. When it comes to the Engineering institutes, minimal focus on phonetics has led to students' poor pronunciation skills with regard to "segmental and suprasegmental aspects of English pronunciation" (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). When it becomes to the budding engineers, the communication part is a mandate for industry readiness. In Telangana, there are around 280<sup>1</sup> engineering institutes. Most of the students taking admissions in these institutes lack proper knowledge of English communication. Phonetics of English is a far away thing for them. That is the reason we are taking them as low grade communicators of English as far as pronunciation part is concerned.

### **Research Motivation and Objectives**

The use of English alone in the classroom is strongly advised in several nations since teaching English has historically been connected with a monolingual bias. Since English is now frequently used to teach academic material, the rigid separation of the two languages can be an issue because it inhibits students from employing materials they have already learned in the other language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Kubota, 2018). This research aims to improve and solve problems of Telugu speakers of English pronunciation by motivating them. The proposed EG-MT model particularly targets the budding Engineers who need proper training in English RP pronunciation. The EG-MT model encourages and motivates them to learn it without feeling inferior and be industry ready.

## **Literature Review**

### **Translanguaging**

The term translanguaging comes from Cen Williams, a leading educator in the 80's, who used the term first time to describe a language practice, implying the planned and systematic use of two languages in the same class. The term was later translated into English as translanguifying, then changed to translanguaging by Baker (2001), to describe a language practice that involves consciously switching between input and output languages in the classroom (Lewis et al. 2012 ). However, later it was also used to encompass the nature and purpose of this linguistic process. Translanguaging is now used to denote linguistic practices involving the conscious process of switching between languages, as well as the theoretical reasoning behind them, e.g. defining translanguaging as "The ability of polyglots to switch back and forth between languages and to see the different languages that make up their language as an integrated system". Other definitions also often emphasize the purpose of this linguistic practice – consider García (2009), which defines interlingualism as "the act of bilinguals responding to different linguistic features or ways of doing things as autonomous languages "In order to maximize communicative potential" or Baker's (2001) interpretation, where interlingualism is seen as "the process of forming meaning, forming experience, comprehension, and acquiring knowledge through the use of two languages". When defining interlingualism , it should be noted that while the above features are widely

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<sup>1</sup> NIRF (2022)

accepted by linguists in the field, there is no general consensus on what it means to integrate language systems and how the concept of cross-lingualism should be understood. Language should be understood within this theoretical framework. To shed light on this issue, García and Lin (2016) propose a definition to distinguish between two versions of language translation, which they call "strong language translation" and "weak language translation". The two versions of the translation express different views on the language system and the language learning process. On the one hand, the cross-lingual strong version does not distinguish between languages, but talks about a language system and grammar from which users of a language can choose the features they need in their interactions. On the other hand, weaker versions of translanguaging maintain traditional language boundaries but advocate blurring these boundaries, emphasizing the fluidity and overlap between different language systems. It is possible to apply translanguaging techniques in a variety of tasks that need not be just speaking ability but also listening, reading, or writing ability in a way that permits or promotes the use of other languages alongside the target language (L2).

### **Translanguaging in a Foreign Language Classroom**

With regard to the use of cross-lingual approaches in foreign language teaching, data on the effectiveness of these practices is rather scarce, but some studies point to the benefits of cross-lingualism in foreign language teaching. For example, Portolés and Martí (2017) analyzed and demonstrated the language behavior of young learners (age 5) in a multilingual environment. How adolescents use their full language repertoire while communicating with each other and construct new concepts based on their prior knowledge. The implementation of cross-language practice removes the pressure of having to speak perfect English, creates a calmer and more relaxed atmosphere in her classroom, and encourages students to actively participate in class and use their language skills more confidently.

Arguably, cross-language instruction in the classroom can serve both as a unifying element, bridging the gap between participants from different language backgrounds, and as a scaffolding to help aspiring bilingual students keep up with more advanced learners, while at the same time demonstrate their language skills as well and continually improve skills and abilities. Interpreters can be used in a variety of activities to practice different language skills such as speaking, writing, reading or listening. The goal of interlingual practice is to maximize language learners' language proficiency without conforming to the idealized native speaker's norms.

### **Phonetics for L2 learners**

The most difficult component of Indian speakers' English pronunciation is pronunciation. Grammar and vocabulary are prioritised in many Indian language classrooms, but there is no deliberate effort made to practise pronunciation. Poor pronunciation breeds miscommunication and leaves a bad image. Pronunciation is influenced by a number of variables, including native language interference, exposure, phonetic aptitude, educational background, and motivation. The most debilitating influence, which shows up as incorrect pronunciation, comes from the local tongue. When we learn English as children, our mother tongue has little bearing on our ability to speak English fluently. We are unlikely to develop a native-like English accent if we start learning the language later.

The usage of the teacher's mother tongue during a bilingual lesson can affect how well the students pick up the target language. There is no interruption if the teacher is more proficient in the second language (English). When a teacher's proficiency in the target language is insufficient, the mother tongue predominates and has an influence over the second language.

At the beginner level, there are numerous techniques to teach listening discrimination through pronunciation. One common strategy is to follow along with the instructor while listening.

Students might not truly detect changes with this method, though, unless the teacher specifically points them out. Lack of modelling of pronunciation outside of frequent conversational input between the instructor and pupils is referred to as "the quiet approach" in a well-known technique (Gattegno, 1962).

This might have students pay closer attention to the input they have and discover discrepancies as they consider what the ideal output should be.

There are many ways to teach hearing discrimination through pronunciation at the introductory level. One typical tactic is to listen and follow along with the instructor.

The capacity to perform mental operations on the output of the process that transforms the acoustic data into a series of phonemes is referred to as phonological awareness, according to Tunmer (1997). Yopp & Yopp (2009) define phonemic awareness, a component of phonological awareness, as "the ability to attend to and alter phonemes" in the spoken word.

By combining phonemic awareness, phonics education encourages learners to become more conscious of the relationship between sounds and letters. Phonetics teaching teaches students "the link between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language," according to Doty et. al (2015). Although phonetics instruction is typically used to enhance literacy in the L1, there are instances of this approach being employed in EFL 6 courses to enhance either reading or pronunciation abilities. Ibarrola (2007) advocates using phonics training in EFL primary school settings to enhance pronunciation in addition to reading comprehension.

### **Telugu Vs Telugu English Vs English**

Telugu sound system is different from English. There are some vowels, consonants and diphthong similarity between them but overall English phonetics stands in contrast with Telugu phonetics.

Pisegna & Volenec (2021) have discovered that the Telugu English (TE) vowel inventory is made up of diphthongs (ai, au, oi) and monophthongs (I, i, e, ae, u, u, ə, ə o, a, a). According to Hillenbrand et al. (1995), this work offers the first spectrographic analysis of TE vowels for English, as well as a description of their acoustic regions. Except for [ɔ] and [], all vowels have been determined to be more central in TE than in English.

Pisegna & Volenec (2021) have proved that the voiced labiodental fricative [v] is present in a regular Native English speaker's phoneme inventory, but not in the consultant's TE. Without any discernible pattern, the trill /r/ was realised as [r] or [ɹ], and on occasion as [ɹ] in the intervocalic position.

The distribution of the lateral approximant [l] was predictable and constant; alveolar [l] always realised as the retroflex approximant [ɭ] in the word-final position. Alveolar [l] occurred both word-initially and word-medially, but never word-finally.

Research have shown that Telugu vowels are longer by 50 percent than English vowels. Vowel sounds could be made with longer vowels than what English speakers typically use.

There are numerous English-like Telugu consonants that are formed as dentalized and/or aspirated sounds. The production of English stop consonants may be influenced by these patterns. Words in Telugu typically finish with vowels. A word can finish in m, n, y, or w. Final consonants might be changed to a permissible Telugu final consonant or eliminated entirely. Telugu has a vowel harmony where the first vowel determines the type of vowel that follows it in 2-syllable syllables. This vowel harmony may have an impact on second syllable vowel mistakes. The EG-MT model which we propose helps to resolve challenge and improve students' listening, speaking, reading, writing skills. Furthermore, the students are encouraged to be bilingual.

## **Research Sketch**

### **Research Issues**

During first year Phonetics classes, students were always found to be confused with the sounds of English and Telugu. They were mixing up the Telugu Vowels and consonants with English. This paper will address the issue by enhancing students' overall development in listening, speaking, reading, writing in English.

Also, by the experimental approach, it will be proved that which method of phonetics teaching is better? Exclusive English or Experimental English?

### The Study Materials

The goal of this study is to develop an efficient method for teaching phonetics to the freshman engineers. We propose the EG-MT method for teaching English to these students, and then validate the theoretical hypotheses.

Therefore, it is crucial and required to consider the research conditions.

Following an on-the-spot research and interview findings, it is stated that the students who felt they are facing problems in their phonetics classes and the students who had maximum MTI<sup>2</sup> over the English language were taken as the objects for this study. Total 12 students from first year B.tech were chosen and were involved in the experiment. The students' educational experiences were considered in order to comprehend their viewpoint on language use in class, especially as this influences how the students perceive themselves as language users. Since this already establishes the standards for the ideal foreign language speaker, how language learners perceive their language skills and how confident they are in their language abilities heavily depend on their prior language learning experience. Additionally, students' self-perceptions as language speakers and learners have an impact on their motivation to learn. This helps in setting the stage for both the facilitator and the students. Also, It is crucial to remember that the majority of the students who took part in the translanguaging activity came from educational backgrounds where only the usage of English was promoted in class. In some cases, the standards of monolingual language education and learning were the only factors that influenced the development of the ought-to L2 self and the ideal L2 self imagery. Below, "Table 1" and "Table 2" provide basic information about the objects.

**Table 1: The Research Objects**

Course	Year	Male	Female	Phonetic Knowledge
B.Tech	1	6	6	Zero

**Table 2: Basic Information of Objects**

Objects	Year	AGE	SEX	Phonetic Knowledge
Sai Prakash	1	18	Male	Zero
Om	1	18	Male	Zero
Ravi	1	19	Male	Zero
Shyam	1	18	Male	Zero
Rana	1	18	Male	Zero
Mohan	1	19	Male	Zero
Bhavika	1	18	Female	Zero
Somlatha	1	18	Female	Zero
Gayatri	1	18	Female	Zero
Nikitha	1	18	Female	Zero
Pooja	1	19	Female	Zero
Seema	1	19	Female	Zero

### Research Techniques

The subjects of an educational experiment must be divided into groups using the scientific methods of grouping. Measurement grouping, matching grouping, and randomization grouping are some of the frequently employed techniques. However, there are no time limits on these.

Any of the aforementioned methods will interfere with the regular teaching schedule if the experiment is conducted during regular teaching hours. English classes also aren't typically held at the same time. As a result, these three groups are impractical for this study.

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<sup>2</sup> Mother tongue influence

As the experimental group and the exclusive group, some natural classes with a few key characteristics were chosen (Wen Qiufang, 2001). The subjects were split into control and experimental groups, and a pre-test was administered to each group separately.

The experimental group was then given the "EG -MT" treatment while the exclusive group received phonetics instruction in an English-only classroom. Both the groups underwent testing five months later.

### Data Collection and Analysis

This paper takes pretest and post-test, participation of class and interview. At first, we collected the result of pretest and analyzed the data between Exclusive English and Experimental English groups.

**Table 3: Pre-test Results**

Category	Objects	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total	Mean	SD
Exclusive English	Sai	15	5	8.5	8	36.5	34.58	1.86
	Prakash							
	Ravi	15	5	6	7	33		
	Rana	14	5	4.5	12.5	36		
	Bhavika	15	5	6	8	34		
	Somlatha	14	5	4.5	12.5	36		
Gayatri	14	5	6	7	32			
Experimental English	Om	13	5	8	9	35	35.33	3.5
	Shyam	15	5	9	12	41		
	Mohan	12	5	7	8	32		
	Nikitha	13	5	7	8	33		
	Pooja	12	5	9	12	38		
	Seema	11	5	8	9	33		

The experimental English class's mean is 35.33 while the exclusive English class's mean is 34.5. According to "Table 3," the English class's standard deviation is 1.86 while the experimental English's standard deviation is 3.5. Therefore, it is difficult to see the general difference between the two groups.

After that, "EG-MT" method will be used in the experimental English class's study purpose, while the exclusive English will be taught simply in English language.

Then the items underwent testing for 5 months. In between, the progress was tracked and accordingly worksheets, quizzes etc were prepared.

**Table 4: Post Test Results**

Category	Objects	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total	Mean	SD
Exclusive English	Sai	19	16	18	18.5	71.5	69.75	2.32
	Prakash							
	Ravi	19	15	18	16	68		
	Rana	18	16	18	20	72		
	Bhavika	18	16	18	20	72		
	Somlatha	19	15	18	15	67		
Gayatri	19	15	18	16	68			
Experimental English	Om	20	18.5	17	20	75.5	76.25	0.52
	Shyam	20	19.5	17	20	76.5		
	Mohan	20	17.5	18.5	20	76		
	Nikitha	20	19.5	17	20	76.5		
	Pooja	20	18.5	18.5	20	77		
	Seema	20	17.5	18.5	20	76		

The post-test table, which is the decider table showed promising results for EG-MT model. The post-test mean for the exclusive English class is 69.75, the standard deviation is 2.32, and the mean outcomes for the experimental English class are 76.25, 0.52 as the standard deviation. The two groups therefore differ significantly from one another, this clearly shows the success of our proposed model for effective phonetics learning in a bilingual class.

**Table 5: The pretest and post-test comparison between the exclusive English and experimental English classes**

Accomplishment	Category	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Pre-Test	Exclusive English	36.5	32	34.25	3.18
	Experimental English	41	32	36.5	6.36
Post-Test	Exclusive English	72	67	69.5	3.53
	Experimental English	76.5	75.5	76	0.70

From "Table 5," it is clear that there is no significant difference between the two groups as far as the pre-test is concerned because the mean shows no noticeable difference. According to the post-test results, the experimental english's mean was 7 points higher than the exclusive English group's, and its standard deviation was lower, indicating that it was close to the average value. In contrast, the exclusive English group's students' differences were greater, indicating that there was a significant difference between the two groups.

## Result and Discussion

### Research's Key Findings

Firstly, students who receive "EG+MT" phonetics teaching in class are more engaged, active learners who contribute more to the classroom environment. Compared to students taking classes taught entirely in English, there is much less uncertainty in the classroom or it may be corrected more quickly. In addition, students can comprehend what they have learnt in "EG+MT" model.

### Thoughts on the Causes of the Result

Students were unable to differentiate between the sounds of letters and monograms of English and Telugu initially. As they simply were not aware of it. Additionally, they had trouble pronouncing the letters non Telugu sounds in English. They were unsure of what the teacher meant when she pronounced certain exclusive English sounds. Words like cake, kite, note, cute, etc. are still spelled with the pronunciation of [a], [e], [o], and [a]. But after the implication of 25% Telugu in the Experimental class, they had a better understanding of the sounds of English as they compared it with Telugu which paved the way for a better understanding. Also, that one fourth of Telugu infusion acted as a moral boost which made them more confident.

### Evaluation of the Research's Importance

We have used a bilingual teaching strategy called translanguaging language teaching technique that includes translation and code transfer, among other things. Therefore, "EG+MT" model is better suited for first year B.Tech in lower grades to develop their bilingual skills. The goal of bilingual assistance, according to Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003), is to assist students in accessing the curriculum until they have mastered enough English to proceed to monolingual instruction in English. Sometimes it is simpler to employ L1 terms than to try to translate them into the closest English equivalent, which can be

difficult and misleading. As noticed by Canagarajah, the teacher can make sure that the lecture is relevant to the students' cultural background by encouraging them to respond to questions in their first language (L1). Elsa Auerbach (1993) uses research and practical examples to demonstrate the need of using the L1 in early L2 lessons for both later success and a seamless transfer to the target language. The insistence on using exclusively English in the classroom "rests on untested assumptions, originates in the political agenda of dominant groups, and serves to sustain existing relations of power," as she notes about the American context, is also true of other contexts.

Additionally, it is crucial to ground communication for low-grade B.Tech students in situational context. The target language, the linguistic and metalinguistic surroundings, and additional language signs (items, photos, videos, radio, games, etc.) should be combined by the teacher in 25% of the situation. Malinowski (1923) stated that in its essence, language is embedded inside a context of situation and that the context of situation in which utterances are made cannot be ignored. In other words, words and utterances can have a variety of meanings and purposes depending on the situation. Therefore, one can only truly analyse and comprehend language communication if they take into account the context in addition to the linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts in which it occurs. For instance, pronunciation of "entrepreneur" is harder for lower-level B.Tech students. And speaking entirely in English in phonetics class makes it impossible for kids to understand it, and it is challenging to reproduce its pronunciation. Students will, however, decode the correct pronunciation if it is introduced with Telugu language sounds and other language indicators. Students will have a greater understanding of the word "entrepreneur" and its pronunciation after listening to audio, mimicking it, and then teaching it to others. Infusion of Telugu language eradicated the insecurities in them and the pronunciation of the word is no more challenging for them.

The use of translanguaging throughout this process enables the teaching of phonetics and raises learners' level of bilingualism. Additionally, when a pronunciation issue causes uncertainty, the confused information is first written on the whiteboard to help the students distinguish between the two. Second, make the sound better. In order to strengthen the learners' learning content, the "EG+MT" approach is applied.

### **Possible and Useful Research Lines**

Translanguaging is a primary component of versatile bilingual teaching strategy. The deepening of economic globalisation, however, has made cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contact among nations and ethnic groups more difficult, spreading more widely each day. Translanguaging should therefore be taken into account during multilingualism.

## **Summary**

### **Important Findings**

Firstly, the pre-test and post-test prove that the students who are taught phonetics using the "EG+MT" model are more engaged, active, and have better input and output. Confusion is significantly less common in the class or is easier to correct than for students in classes taught only in English. In addition, students can comprehend what they have learnt in "EG+MT" method of phonetics teaching.

### **The Value of the Research**

This research is theoretically significant, by incorporating translanguaging into phonetics training, it attempts to clear up any misunderstandings between English phones and Telugu phones. If they understand the differences, they have a better understanding of L2 phonetics. Translanguaging should therefore be taken into account during multilingualism.

The research is experimental and qualitative, and has relevance in practise. The analysis aims to provide a theoretical approach to teaching English. I hope it will be useful to other training universities/colleges/schools in the phonetics classroom. Methodologically noteworthy, the study was based on genuine educational objectives in a phonetics classroom.

### **Limitations**

First off, 5 months is insufficient to measure the impact of teaching. Second, there are just 12 students in the Exclusive English and Experimental English groups, therefore the objects are not very big. More objects are required for further investigation. Last but not least, since phonetics involves more than just the sounds of letters and monograms, the test paper lacks sufficient specificity and concreteness. Word accent, intonation, stress etc. are left out.

### **Suggestions and Scope for Further Research**

The benefits of translanguaging in phonetics teaching must be utilised to their fullest, and teaching methods must incorporate both our cultural heritage and the standards of the learners. Future research should take longer and consider more objects; this research's uniform test paper and questionnaire can be used to enhance the impact and learners' evaluation. Additionally, certain background information, such as a parent's work, the environment in the household, or the qualities of the learner can also be taken under considerations. The left out components of phonetics; word stress, intonation, accent etc can be taught and tested by implementing our "EG+MT" model.

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