# A Study of the Attitudes of Chinese Language Teachers towards the Application of Translanguaging during Online Classes in an International School of Bangkok

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to examine the attitude of Chinese language teachers towards the application of translanguaging and explore the situations for Chinese language teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online foreign classes in the Kindergarten of an international school of Bangkok. Fifteen Chinese language teachers from Kindergarten of the international school participated in the two-month study in the academic year 2020-2021. The research conducted used a mixed method design. A questionnaire was conducted to investigate the attitudes of Chinese language teachers and possible situations they would apply translanguaging in their synchronous online classes. In addition, an observation on the situations in which Chinese language teachers applied translanguaging in their synchronous online classes was conducted. Analyses implied that Chinese language teachers from Kindergarten held positive attitudes towards translanguaging during online classes. The questionnaire results revealed that: 1) most Chinese language teachers held positive attitudes towards translanguaging during online classes 2) the teachers held positive attitudes towards translanguaging during online classes because translanguaging was beneficial to help students understand academic contents, help teacher conduct effective classroom management and build up a rapport with students; 3) most beneficial situations are content-related and management-related and most detrimental situations are content-related and relationship-related. The observation results revealed that: 1) Chinese language teachers applied translanguaging in their synchronous online teaching; 2) Chinese language teachers applied translanguaging in different situations; 3) the applications of translanguaging for the content-related purposes were more frequent in synchronous online teaching. Based on the findings, the use of translanguaging during online classes is recommended in teaching and learning Chinese language, especially for teachers from kindergarten.

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**Keywords:** Translanguaging, Bilingual education, Code-switching, Language policy, Online learning

**Introduction**

The outbreak of the new pandemic Coronavirus, known as Covid-19, has affected the global economy and global education. Academic units were forced to shut down and forwent in-person teaching due to the deadly and infectious characteristics of the disease. It was uncertain when students could get back to school. The circumstances made academic units realize there is an urgent need to shift away from the traditional classroom teaching model to an online teaching model. In this study, the teaching models of this international school have also been shifted from classroom teaching models to online teaching models due to the global pandemic.

Singh and Thurman (2019) asserted: "online education is defined as education being delivered in an online environment by using the internet for teaching and learning. The adoption of online education has several more advantages. EI and Mupinga (2007) stated that one of the advantages is that students can take classes from any provided location as long as they have access to a computer. In addition to that, online education also raises issues of teaching and learning strategies, learner autonomy, and motivation. One of the concerned issues is the application of translanguaging.

The term *translanguaging* came from the Welsh *trawsieithu* and was coined by Cen Williams (1996), which refers to the intentional alteration of input and output of the languages within student activities in bilingual classrooms. Hereafter, Baker (2001) advocated the word 'translanguaging' to translate the term 'trawsieithu'. As translanguaging was used to discuss the emerging discourses around the nature of language, second language acquisition, and bilingualism, the pedagogic scope of translanguaging has been extended. In 2003, Williams further defined translanguaging as using the more robust language to reinforce the weaker language to develop a balanced language repertoire for bilingual children. Translanguaging is not only viewed as a teaching strategy but also a cognitive process. Translanguaging can enhance the mental process which incorporates multilingual materials preparation, activities demonstration, and content scaffolding in the bilingual classroom (Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2007). Furthermore, Wei (2018) emphasized that translanguaging is not just a set of linguistic structures but a dynamic practice and a process of knowledge construction.

Translanguaging challenges the conventional monoglossic ideologies because translanguaging separates the first language (L1) and second language (L2) in language learning, but the Monoglossic ideologies value the form of target-language-only. Cummins (2007) points

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out that the utility of students' L1 as a cognitive tool in learning the L2' are compatible in the foreign language classroom.

According to Thomas (2014), native English teachers will spend more time speaking the target language during classroom teaching than non-native English teachers. By analogy, the school administrators believe native Chinese teachers are better than non-native Chinese speakers in developing the speaking and listening skills of students. The attitude towards translanguaging is an important factor for administrators and teachers to decide if they should integrate translanguaging in the curriculum and teaching practice. We can assume that the positive attitudes of teachers facilitate effective language acquisition, adversely negative attitudes result in low language acquisition when teaching a foreign language (Hashwani, 2008). Therefore, positive attitude holders are more likely to apply translanguaging and negative attitude holders are less likely to apply translanguaging. In addition to that, teachers' attitudes have been recognized as a significant factor which influences the quality of language teaching and learning (Littlejhon, 2000). Garrett (2010) added a high relevance between the perception of attitudes towards learning a second language and the achievement of language proficiency.

**Research Objectives**

The research aimed:

1. To identify the attitudes of Chinese language teachers towards the application of translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes in the Kindergarten of an international school.

2. To explore the situations for Chinese language teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes in the Kindergarten of an international school.

**Literature Review**
**Attitude and Translanguaging**

Chinese language teachers' attitude towards translanguaging is the focus of this study. Attitudes could be defined as the perceived effectiveness that has been assigned to a certain object (Zhao & Cziko, 2001). From this perspective, the effectiveness that Chinese language teachers perceive in applying translanguaging in synchronous online classes determines their attitudes. Therefore, the Chinese language teachers who perceive translanguaging as an effective teaching strategy in their synchronous online teaching might hold positive attitudes

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towards the application of translanguaging in their online classes. Because of the positive attitudes towards translanguaging, teachers are more likely to integrate it into their teaching.

*Cambridge Dictionary* defines attitude as a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this. The behavior of applying translanguaging can be seen as the result of attitudes on translanguaging. In turn, the outcomes of applying translanguaging could affect attitudes towards translanguaging. The relationship of behavior and attitudes are reciprocal to each other (Liaw, 2002). The application of translanguaging can be seen as the result of attitudes on translanguaging. According to Gardner et al. (1993), attitudes can provide an understanding of teachers' decisions and perceptions. In this study, the decisions that Chinese language teachers make to apply translanguaging and how to prepare to teach with translanguaging may be explained by attitudes.

**Translanguaging in Bilingual Education**

Translanguaging has been adapted as education takes more responsibility for educating not the majority but all individuals. Williams (2002) defined translanguaging as a bilingual cognitive process that involves learning two languages of students. Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) explained that the bilingual cognitive process refers to retaining and developing bilingualism. Translanguaging develops the relationship between weaker language and dominant language to sustain bilingual practices. It weakens the power of the dominant language, which helps students build awareness of the global classroom environment and creates a tolerant environment for students to practice languages. Translanguaging is a bilingual pedagogy that enables students to acquire the new language with other semiotic resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Creese and Blackledge (2010) argued that translanguaging incorporates language-minoritized students' languages with cultural reference to sustain their dynamic languages at school. Therefore, language-minoritized students must take advantage of their languages to learn meaningfully. In education, García and Kano (2014) further defined translanguaging as a process where the entire language practices of all students are engaged in discursive practices to develop new language practices.

With the attention of learning a language has shifted from communicative skills to the development of critical thinking and deep comprehension in the twenty-first century, translanguaging has become a necessary strategy for students to engage in meaningful discussion and comprehension. Students are given agency to develop their language repertoire and adjust the input and output of their linguistic knowledge to maximize communication in the learning process (Cenoz et al., 2017). Bilingual education puts on a translanguaging lens to educate students, recognizing the language backgrounds for minorities and building translanguaging

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space for the majority. The gap between monologic education and bilinguals is gradually made up as translanguaging incorporates different language practices. García (2009) argues that it is important to put the minority language alongside the majority language, thus ensuring for it a place in powerful domains, it is important to preserve space, although not a rigid or static place, in which the minority language does not compete with the majority language. The term *translanguaging space* has been proposed to construct spaces where linguistically diverse children are given agency to involve bilingual repertoire to construct language expertise and develop deep comprehension (Wei, 2011). The space is built on the fact that we perceive the world from our languages influenced by nations and cultures (García et al., 2017).

Translanguaging gives back the voice to students that have been taken away by ideologies of monoglot standards (Silverstein et al., 1996). It serves as an essential practice to assist students in handling complex learning challenges and involve students in classroom interaction. In bilingual education, students are encouraged to use their language repertoire in four language skills to achieve initiative participation flexibly in class quickly. Translanguaging is also a transformative pedagogy to simultaneously engage students' language repertoires (Flores & García, 2013). It permits students to express their perspectives in a full range of expression and supports their positions to be understood entirely (Wei & Ho, 2018). Translanguaging is a strategic approach to scaffold bilinguals to understand the content, and practice new languages and knowledge (Cenoz et al., 2017). Students are encouraged to negotiate to help interpret meaning. Translanguaging builds on the language capability of bilingual students as a pedagogical strategy that incorporates preparing multilingual materials, demonstrating activities, and scaffolding the meaning of contents in the bilingual classroom (Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2007). Bilingual students who use translanguaging must take control of their languages for better acquisition of new languages and knowledge (Moll,1992). Students use translanguaging to pose questions that may go beyond the teaching tasks to extend their academic knowledge. They are allowed to question in their familiar languages for the simple reason that they would like to elaborate more views without language barriers.

**Translanguaging and Language Policy**
English has become the linguistic currency that plays the role of an international language. The conception "international language" is also known as a "link language" or "lingua franca" which refers to a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996). Thailand conducted an education reform related to English education in 1996 to better cope with the advance in modern technology in the world (Pitiyanuwat & Anantrasirichai, 2002).

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English is regarded as the fundamental approach to developing the quality of life and enhancing national co-existence in the world community (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). As the Chinese economy has been developing rapidly in recent years, China gradually occupies an important position in international trade. Whereas Chinese is the biggest community of migrants in Thailand, most Chinese descendants are not able to speak Chinese (Hays, 2008). The Ministry of Education of Thailand conducted a policy that required schools to set up Chinese courses (Masuntisuk, 2013). The purpose of Thai people to learn Chinese includes the following aspects: first, some Chinese Thais hope to inherit Chinese culture through learning Chinese to enhance their ethnic identity; and second, some Thais are aware of the great potential of China's development. They hope to communicate with the Chinese and achieve commercial cooperation by mastering Chinese. Third, many Thai parents hope their children can enhance their social competence and pave the better way for the future by learning Chinese (Kanoksilapatham, 2011). As the sociocultural context is becoming more dynamic and multilingual, there is a need for language educators to develop language policy.

Language policy reflects the educational philosophy of administrators and connects to the language practice of educators in the teaching process (Trujillo, 2005). Language policy includes three distinct components: language ideology, language management, and language practice (Spolsky, 2001). In a multilingual classroom, implicit language policy refers to the conventional rules for a specific choice of languages and appropriate choice of levels and registers of languages such as the formality of speech according to the characters of the hearer and the situations (Spolsky, 2002). Since language is made up of a cluster of linguistic units, language policy may influence the consideration of language speakers to make choices on language practice at any level from an individual linguistic unit to a cluster of linguistic units. Language ideology is the beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived structure and use (Silverstein, 1979). With the increasing awareness of social justice and equity issues of ethnic minorities, students' linguistic and sociocultural diversity has become a phenomenon that challenges the monoglossic language ideology of educational systems including Thailand's. However, the firmly established monolingual ideologies influenced the language policies to prohibit the educational contexts from accepting code-switching and translanguaging (Lin & Martin, 2005). There is a need to prepare teachers to become receptive to multilingualism to teach emergent bilinguals (de Jong, 2011).

## Research Design

This research used a mixed method design because it employed two methods, which collected quantitative and qualitative data to draw a well-validated conclusion. The first method

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was a questionnaire that was conducted to address research objective 1 and 2. The second method was an observation of synchronous online Chinese language classes which was designed to supplement the research objective 2.

The questionnaire design involved quantitative and qualitative items. A set of quantitative items were designed for Chinese language teachers to respond "Yes" or "No" based on their teaching experience and knowledge. In addition, another set of qualitative items which were designed in the form of open-ended questions about the key keywords "attitude", "translanguaging" and "synchronous online classes" were structured to allow participants to express their standpoints. The questionnaire design was conducted to address the research objectives 1 and 2.

**Population**

The population of this study can be described as follow:

There were totally 15 Chinese language teachers at the Kindergarten of the international school. They were assigned to three campuses which are located in different areas of Bangkok. Therefore, 15 Chinese language teachers who worked at the Kindergarten of the international school during the academic year 2020-2021 were the population in this study. All 15 teachers are female who have Chinese nationality. And they can speak English.

**Sample**

Because of the small population, this study took all 15 Chinese language teachers who worked at Kindergarten of the international school in the academic year 2020-2021 as the sample for the questionnaire. All teachers agreed to participate in the questionnaire. The teachers were teaching students who were 3 to 6 years old from different nationalities. Most teachers were experienced teachers who had more than 3 years teaching experience in young learners. The maximum number of students was 20 in a class. Most teachers had around 15-20 students in their class. The more students were in classes, the more challenging for teachers to focus on individual students.

Out of the 15 Chinese language teachers, there were 4 teachers who were willing to participate as the sample for the observation. Each teacher taught more than one class, but the researcher just chose one class of teachers to observe. However, the private information of teachers was not allowed to be mentioned in the study, and the portraiture of teachers and students was forbidden to be presented.

**Research Instrument**

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There were two instruments used in this study: (i) a questionnaire; and (ii) an observation checklist. Since the context of this study had similarities with a previous study conducted by Nambisan (2014) which investigated the attitudes of the teachers towards translanguaging and its practices in the Spanish context, its instrument was adapted to investigate the objectives of this study by the researcher. The adaptation of an existing instrument facilitated the measurement of the objectives.

The items in this questionnaire were adapted from previous research (Nambisan, 2014) and were modified by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of 19 items which included qualitative items and quantitative items. The content of the questionnaire was divided into 3 sections:

Part I-This section consisted of 5 items which were designed as "Yes" or "No" questions to indicate the general information of the teachers. The teachers responded according to their synchronous online teaching experience.

Part II- This section consisted of 10 items which were designed as "Yes" or "No" questions to investigate the attitudes of teachers and specific situations for them to apply translanguaging. The teachers responded according to their attitudes towards translanguaging.

Part III- This section consisted of 4 open-ended questions which were designed to further explore the attitudes of teachers towards translanguaging and specific situations for teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes. Teachers wrote down their answers under each question.

The items in the observation were adapted from previous research (Nambisan, 2014) and modified by the researcher. The researcher aimed to gain more detailed information to supplement the data collected from the questionnaire. This observation was conducted with an observation checklist where the researcher could check and take notes during the online classes. There were 12 items in the observation checklist which included 11 "Yes" or "No" questions and 1 item to describe the situations that teachers applied translanguaging and took notes of the unexpected situations for further analysis.

Due to confidentiality, the researcher was not permitted to record the online classes of 4 Chinese language teachers. However, the observation results of each class were discussed and confirmed by teachers. The observation was conducted from 1st May to 30th June in the academic year 2020-2021. Each teacher was observed for 12 periods (30 minutes per period)

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which lasted for 6 hours over two months. The teachers were informed before the researcher would observe them each time.

**Summary of the Findings**

        This section summarizes the results of the data analysis.

**Finding for Objective One**

1.     Quantitative analyses on the responses of participants to the yes or no questions in Questionnaire.

        The analysis on question: "Do you believe translanguaging is beneficial in foreign language teaching?" revealed 66.7% of Chinese language teachers answered "Yes". The result implies that most Chinese language teachers hold positive attitudes towards the application of translanguaging in foreign language teaching.

2.     Qualitative analysis on the responses of participants to open-ended questions in questionnaire

        The analysis on question: "What is your attitude towards the application of translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language teaching classes?" revealed 46.7% of teachers agree translanguaging can bring benefits to the class and 20% of them believe that it's practical to use translanguaging when teaching young children. This means that 66.7% of Chinese language teachers hold positive attitudes towards the application of translanguaging in synchronous online classes.

**Finding for Objective Two**

1.     Quantitative analysis on the responses of participants to the yes or no questions in questionnaire

    The analysis on 9 "Yes" or "No" questions revealed more than 55.37% of Chinese language teachers answered "Yes" to 6 questions (question 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13). The result implied the frequent situations when 15 Chinese language teachers apply translanguaging in classes.

2.     Quantitative analysis on the responses of participants to the yes or no questions in observation

    The analysis on 8 "Yes" or "No" questions revealed more than 50% of Chinese

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teachers got "Yes" to each of the questions. The result implied 4 Chinese language teachers apply translanguaging in real online classes, and translanguaging is frequently used in different situations.

3.      Qualitative analysis on the open-ended questions in questionnaire

The analysis on question: "Please describe in what situations you will apply translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language teaching classes." revealed 12 situations that Chinese language teachers described. The results imply that Chinese language teachers will apply translanguaging for three main different purposes which include content-related purposes, management-related and relationship-related purposes. Out of the three types of purposes, content-related and management-related purposes are more frequently mentioned compared with relationship-related purposes.

The analysis on question: "In your own words, please describe in which situations using translanguaging is beneficial and in which situations is it detrimental in synchronous online classes?" revealed 12 beneficial situations and 6 detrimental situations. The results imply that there are multiple beneficial situations for Chinese language teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online classes. Moreover, most beneficial situations are content-related and management-related. And there are varying detrimental situations for Chinese language teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online classes. Those situations focus on content-related and relationship-related translanguaging.

4.      Qualitative analysis on the open-ended question in observation

The analysis on the question about additional situations revealed 10 additional situations except those in the checklist. Out of 10 situations, 8 situations refer to content-related translanguaging; 2 situations refer to management-related translanguaging. The result implies the application of translanguaging for content-related situations is more frequent in synchronous online teaching.

**Additional Findings**

Qualitative analysis on the responses of participants on the additional information that they would like to share about translanguaging in synchronous online classes showed that there are two additional perceptions mentioned by teachers. The results indicate that teachers should be aware of the frequency of translanguaging in online classes. What's more, teachers

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should value the role of parents and guardians who could benefit from translanguaging when participating in online classes because their understanding could assist students to learn at home.

**Discussion**

This section presents the discussion based on the findings of this study.
The attitude of Chinese language teachers towards the application of translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes

The results of this study indicate that 10 Chinese language teachers hold positive attitudes towards translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes. Their positive attitudes can be based on the belief that translanguaging is a bilingual pedagogy that enables students to acquire the new language with other semiotic resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Chinese language teachers who hold positive attitudes believe translanguaging can bring benefits to the class. Teachers could have realized the bilingual identity of students. According to the definition, the psychological and social state of students who result from interaction via language in which Chinese and English are used for communication are bilingualism (Buler & Yuko, 2014). When learning a new language, bilingual students face different learning challenges and problems from monolingual students. Translanguaging triggers the whole language repertoires of bilingual students in the learning process which could balance the relationship between weaker language (Chinese) and dominant language (English) to create an open environment for students to practice new languages.

Translanguaging can not only create opportunities for students to practice new languages but also encourage them to participate in meaningful discussion and deep comprehension. In the constructivist view, students become active learners to construct their understanding and knowledge castle. This cognitive process develops communicative skills and students' critical thinking skills which are necessary skills for 21st century learners. Moreover, some Chinese language teachers believe that it is practical to use translanguaging when teaching young children. From a sociocultural perspective, child-centered teaching allows the diverse language backgrounds of teachers and students to become a part of the class for the purpose of developing young children (Sanders-Smith, 2015). Under the background of child-centered teaching in the international school, translanguaging could create a space for children to deploy the language repertoire to fit the social contexts which is beneficial for children to take risk in learning a new language (García & Wei, 2014).

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The findings about the positive attitudes towards translanguaging support the study of Su Myat (2018) in which English teachers showed their positive attitude towards the application of translanguaging in foreign language classrooms. Teachers were called to aware the benefits of translanguaging and intgegrate first language to support language acquisition in foreign language classes.

The situations for Chinese language teachers to apply translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes

Due to the online environment, translanguaging is mainly conducted by Chinese language teachers which is also known as official translanguaging (Williams, 2012). The results of the study indicate that Chinese language teachers apply translanguaging in multiple situations which can be generalized into three categories according to the purposes: content-related application, management-related application, and interrelationship-related applications of translanguaging.

The content-related applications of translanguaging focus on helping students understand the meaning of academic content. Here are two reasons why Chinese language teachers are willing to use content-related applications. From student' perspective, the social environment can't provide sufficient opportunities for them to practice a foreign language which could result in limited language proficiency. From teachers' perspective, it is difficult for teachers to explain complex concepts with the target language. Therefore, the target-language teaching method is not suitable for bilingual students to learn a forein language. Translanguaging could function as a tool to fill the gap. As Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) clarified, learning should match with the development level of children. In the scale of ZPD, the application of translanguaging can assist children to complete new tasks and solve problems. However, teachers may think it will hinder the practice of target language. Even though translanguaging does not meet the needs of high proficiency students. But the education is not only responsible for the excellent students but all individuals including low proficiency students. The permission for students to use their full language repertoire to interact with classmates could facilitate the social construction of knowledge and understanding.

The management-related applications focus on conducting effective classroom management in terms of student discipline and management instructions. Students lacking discipline is the main problem not only in the classroom but also online classrooms. In the online environment where students are not fully under the supervision of teachers, students are required to be self-disciplined (Schott et al., 2003). A well-managed class can guide students towards

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self-discipline. Translanguaging can be used as a proactive strategy to maintain a positive classroom environment that prevents students from developing discipline problems. Chinese language teachers can use translanguaging to explain rules clearly to students and strengthen the class rules when dealing with student misbehavior. Moreover, translanguaging can make positive reinforcement on the awareness of appreciated behaviors with a better-mastered language. The management-related applications not only pay attention to discipline student behaviors but also give instruction to sustain classroom management. Effective classroom management can maximize children's learning opportunities. The learning time could be increased by effective management instructions. When students are actively engaged in classroom activities, they may spend more time on learning and less time on non-goal-directed activities.

The relationship-related applications of translanguaging concentrate on improving relationships in class. Translanguaging can nurture the relationship between teachers and students which is identified as one of the three meta-functions: build effective relationships with students (García et al., 2012). Translanguaging may derive the collaborative role from Chinese language teachers to students by setting up project-based instruction and collaborative groupings to make students use Chinese and English languages as a resource (Busch, 2011). Translanguaging both benefits to teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. The rapport will make students feel comfortable and get used to the new environment.

The findings of this study about the pedagogical applications of translanguaging correspond to a previous study of Adinolfi and Astruc (2017) which found the significance for course designers and practitioners to integrate translanguaging opportunities into online foreign language classroom activities. Moreover, the findings of purposeful application of translanguaging support another study of Cenoz et al. (2017) in which translanguaging was understood as intentional instructional strategy.

Implications

The findings of this study permitted the pedagogical implications of translanguaging during online foreign language classes. Based on the findings, Chinese language teachers need to adjust their attitudes towards translanguaging and integrate translanguaging in different situations.

It is critical that teachers recognize the benefits of translanguaging that can be brought to the classroom. Teachers can use translanguaging as a teaching tool to achieve different teaching purposes. If teachers value the entire language repotoris of learners, the language resources of teachers and learners can be integrated in the online classroom context.

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It is critical for teachers to consider the cognitive development of young learners. Translanguaging is a suitable strategy to match the learning and development of students. Their language proficiency and learning ability restrict a foreign language learning. Realizing the mediational role of students' first language in the context of the foreign language environment can encourage learners to actively participate in their foreign language learning processes.

Additionally, the frequency of applying translanguaging needs to be aware by teachers because frequent application may hinder the target language practice. Teachers should address the beneficial situations and teaching purposes in teaching practice in order to meet learners' needs and build an effective learning environment.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings, this study concluded that:

● 10 Chinese language teachers hold positive attitudes while 5 Chinese language teachers hold negative attitudes towards the application of translanguaging in synchronous online foreign language classes in the Kindergarten of an international school.

● Chinese language teachers apply translanguaging in content-related situations, management-related situations, and relationship-related situations in synchronous online foreign language classes in the Kindergarten of an international school.

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