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*Article*

# ChatGPT as a Translanguaging Partner: Filipino University Students' Multilingual Meaning-making in GenAI-mediated Language Learning

**Mark Bedoya Ulla***
Walailak University, Thailand

**Kenneth Ian B. Barrera**
Saint Michael College of Caraga, Philippines

**Joshua Eriberto Miguel G. Llames**
Laguna State Polytechnic University, Philippines

**Rejoice Immanuel Eljoen Merelos**
Khon Kaen University, Thailand

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**Abstract**
This qualitative study examines how Filipino university students integrate ChatGPT into their language-learning practices, with particular attention to translanguaging and multilingual meaning-making. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire completed by 21 university students and follow-up semi-structured interviews with five of these participants. The data were analyzed thematically to examine how students use ChatGPT across English, Filipino, and regional languages, as well as the perceived affordances and limitations of GenAI-mediated language learning. The findings suggest that students engage ChatGPT as a mediational and collaborative resource, not just as a corrective tool. Participants described strategically drawing on their multilingual repertoires to support comprehension, writing, and engagement with academic content, reflecting a distributed form of language learning shaped by linguistic, affective, and technological resources. At the same time, participants reported issues in their use of ChatGPT, particularly when English-centered norms and generic AI-generated outputs marginalized or constrained minoritized languages. The study highlights ChatGPT's potential to support multilingual meaning-making while also showing how GenAI can reproduce dominant language hierarchies. Implications for multilingual language education and GenAI-informed pedagogy are discussed.

**Keywords**
ChatGPT, GenAI and translanguaging, language education, multilingual meaning-making, translanguaging

*Corresponding author. Email: mark.ul@mail.wu.ac.th

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## 1 Introduction

The rapid integration of GenAI into educational settings has intensified scholarly attention to how digital tools mediate language learning in linguistically complex contexts. This focus is particularly timely in the Philippines, where students routinely navigate English, Filipino, and multiple regional languages across academic and everyday contexts. In other words, rather than conceptualizing language ability through an English-only lens, critical language education scholars have increasingly highlighted translanguaging as the intentional and flexible deployment of learners' full linguistic repertoires for meaning-making, identity negotiation, and participation (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; MacSwan, 2019; Wei, 2018).

Among GenAI applications, ChatGPT has attracted particular interest for its ability to simulate dialogue, generate context-sensitive responses, and provide real-time support across languages (Kohnke & Ulla, 2024; Ulla et al., 2023a). These affordances position ChatGPT not merely as a supplementary language-learning aid but as a potential translanguaging partner that can mediate planning, drafting, comprehension, and reflection in multilingual learning processes (Ulla et al., 2024). Prior research has highlighted its usefulness for personalized feedback, interactive scaffolding, and self-directed learning (Dahlan et al., 2024; Liyakat Kazi, 2024), suggesting that GenAI may enable learners to mobilize linguistic resources often marginalized in conventional classroom practices.

Moreover, empirical studies have documented ChatGPT's contributions to vocabulary development, reading comprehension, writing quality, and oral fluency (Barrot, 2024; Khzouz et al., 2024). These benefits are especially important in the Philippine context, where English proficiency continues to shape academic mobility and economic opportunity (Issel-Dombert, 2025). At the same time, Filipino learners do not engage with English in isolation, as their academic and social lives are shaped by dynamic interactions among multiple languages, which they draw on to construct meaning and assert agency. Studies reporting increased motivation, curiosity, and learner confidence when AI tools are used for language learning further suggest that GenAI may sustain engagement in multilingual literacy tasks (Wang, 2025; Zakarneh et al., 2025). Yet whether ChatGPT genuinely expands learners' translanguaging practices or subtly privileges English remains an open empirical question.

Recent scholarship has begun to address this gap by reconceptualizing GenAI use through translanguaging and ecological lenses. For instance, Yu and Jiang (2025) show that GenAI-assisted L2 writing functions as a distributed translanguaging practice in which learners strategically position GenAI as a subordinate collaborator while flexibly drawing on multiple languages for creation, evaluation, and revision. Zhou et al. (2026) also show that multilingual users co-construct a "virtual translanguaging space" with GenAI, characterized by emotional safety and reduced social pressure, which enables heightened metalinguistic awareness and creative meaning-making. Similarly, Derakhshan and Wei (2026) provide quantitative evidence that translanguaging-oriented GenAI instruction significantly enhances learners' positive achievement emotions and academic engagement. These studies suggest that GenAI is not a neutral technological aid but an active participant in multilingual, affective, and agentive learning ecologies.

Although research on GenAI in language education is expanding rapidly, much of the existing work remains anchored in English-dominant contexts and skills-based outcomes (Al-Husban, 2025; Ding et al., 2025; Fathi et al., 2024). Few studies explicitly examine how ChatGPT operates within multilingual or translanguaging-oriented frameworks, or how learners themselves integrate GenAI into their everyday multilingual learning strategies. In the Philippine context, empirical research has yet to explore how GenAI tools influence translanguaging practices, shape meaning-making across English, Filipino, and regional languages, or affect learners' linguistic identities and sense of autonomy.

Thus, this study examines how Filipino students use ChatGPT in their learning practices, focusing on translanguaging in the language classroom. It also explores how these practices provide an opportunity to understand critical GenAI literacy not as a separate technical competence, but as learners' situated

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capacity to question, evaluate, negotiate, and selectively respond to AI-generated language and knowledge through their existing linguistic and contextual resources. Against this background, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do English language learners use ChatGPT as a multilingual resource in their English language learning practices?
2. How do they negotiate the use of ChatGPT alongside their existing linguistic repertoires when engaging in everyday language-learning activities?
3. How do learners critically evaluate and negotiate ChatGPT-generated support in multilingual learning contexts?

## 2 AI Integration in Language Education

AI technologies have transformed language education over the past decade, especially through NLP, adaptive learning systems, chatbots, and large language models (LLMs). Early research mainly focused on GenAI's ability to improve specific language skills, such as grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and writing accuracy, by providing automated feedback and personalized learning paths (Kuddus, 2022; Lin et al., 2023). Tools like Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, and Duolingo's chatbots provided corrective feedback and created low-pressure environments that encouraged independent, repeated practice (Liu, 2024). These early studies emphasized GenAI's effectiveness and scalability for personalized learning, helping reduce learner anxiety and increasing exposure outside traditional classroom settings (Chen, 2024).

However, much of this work was framed within a monolingual paradigm that viewed GenAI as a tool for learning a single "target language," usually English. Such research rarely recognizes learners' multilingual realities or the sociocultural aspects of language use. In contrast, emerging scholarship grounded in translanguaging theory argues that multilingual learners do not separate their languages, as they actively use their full linguistic repertoires to create meaning, negotiate identities, and engage in academic tasks (see Creese & Blackledge, 2010; MacSwan, 2019; Thongwichit et al., 2025; Wei, 2018). Therefore, the importance of GenAI in multilingual education cannot be judged solely by its ability to produce error-free language but also by its capacity to mediate cross-linguistic knowledge and affirm learners' multilingual identities (Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024). This shift in perspective opens the discussion about how GenAI, particularly generative systems like ChatGPT, can promote flexible language use and support teaching practices that value linguistic diversity rather than reinforce monolingual norms.

## 3 Multilingual and Translanguaging-Based Perspectives on AI in Education

Recent studies have increasingly conceptualized GenAI not simply as a linguistic aid but as an active participant in multilingual meaning-making processes (Donley, 2024; Kuzu et al., 2025; Pando et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2025). This shift aligns closely with translanguaging pedagogy, which highlights learners' flexible and agentive use of their full linguistic repertoires to make sense of content, communicate ideas, and enact identity (Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024; Wei, 2018). Within this perspective, GenAI can be understood as a mediational resource that supports cross-linguistic interaction and expands learners' semiotic repertoires rather than enforcing monolingual norms.

Yu and Jiang (2025) make a foundational contribution to this line of inquiry by examining GenAI use in naturalistic L2 writing through a translanguaging lens. Moving beyond earlier work that frames GenAI primarily as a monolingual scaffold for L2 development, their qualitative study foregrounds how multilingual Chinese undergraduates strategically and flexibly engage with AI tools. Drawing on screen recordings, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews, the authors identify four interrelated

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patterns of use: creation, translation, evaluation, and revision. Crucially, learners' participation, language, and tool stances shape these practices, with GenAI often positioned as a subordinate collaborator rather than an authoritative source.

Extending translanguaging theory beyond academic writing, Zhou et al. (2026) examine human–AI interaction through an affective and experiential lens. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, the study explores how highly multilingual graduate students engage linguistically and emotionally with GenAI platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini. The findings introduce the concept of a "virtual translanguaging space" co-constructed by users and AI, characterized by emotional safety, reduced social pressure, and a perceived absence of judgment. Within this space, participants report heightened metalinguistic awareness and engage in strategic, creative, and analytical language practices. In addition, the study reconceptualizes the critical dimension of translanguaging, suggesting a shift from outward-oriented social critique toward introspective evaluations of communicative effectiveness and task-specific meaning-making.

Derakhshan and Wei (2026) also provide quantitative evidence of the socio-emotional impact of translanguaging in GenAI-enhanced classrooms. Their experimental study, conducted in an Iranian university context, investigates how translanguaging pedagogy influences multilingual learners' achievement emotions and academic engagement over time. The findings show that students encouraged to draw on their full linguistic repertoires in GenAI-mediated instruction show significantly greater increases in positive achievement emotions and engagement, alongside decreases in negative emotions, than peers in English-only conditions.

Parallel classroom-based research further illustrates how GenAI can operate as a translanguaging partner. Donley (2024), for instance, documents how teachers in multilingual classrooms used ChatGPT to support multilingual literacy practices, deepen conceptual understanding, and encourage fluid movement across languages. Students engaged in activities such as creating multilingual glossaries, clarifying vocabulary through diverse linguistic resources, and composing texts that incorporated multiple languages.

Similarly, Yu et al. (2025) examine how multilingual students in Chinese universities use ChatGPT to navigate culturally diverse communicative tasks. Learners draw on the AI to shift between languages, translate cultural references, and negotiate meaning across contexts, thereby challenging entrenched monolingual classroom norms. However, the study also highlights structural limitations, as ChatGPT's predominantly English-centered training data often constrain its capacity to represent minoritized languages and culturally specific expressions.

## 4 ChatGPT as a Collaborative Partner in Language Classrooms

As a collaborative partner, ChatGPT may also help language teachers streamline lesson planning and differentiate instruction, though its outputs must be critically reviewed to maintain pedagogical quality (Kohnke et al., 2025; Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Pando et al., 2025). For example, Pando et al. (2025) showed that bilingual teachers used ChatGPT as a "co-planner" to create multilingual materials such as reading passages, vocabulary lists, and grammar explanations. Teachers appreciated ChatGPT's ability to generate different versions of content for students with various proficiency levels. However, they regularly adjusted AI outputs to ensure cultural relevance, age appropriateness, and alignment with the curriculum. Their findings highlight that while ChatGPT can help speed up lesson planning, it still requires substantial teacher oversight to ensure that AI supports, rather than replaces, bilingual teaching expertise.

Furthermore, teacher competence and AI literacy are crucial in making ChatGPT a useful translanguaging partner. Kuzu et al. (2025) found that German preservice teachers with strong prompt engineering skills produced more contextually relevant, multilingual, and pedagogically aligned

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outputs than peers with limited AI training. These findings support Giray (2023), who considers prompt engineering a vital part of modern teacher knowledge frameworks like TPACK. This research highlights that ChatGPT's educational usefulness depends on teachers' ability to craft effective questions, interpret outputs, and adapt them to students' cultural and linguistic contexts.

In addition, studies on learner engagement further emphasize ChatGPT's benefits in multilingual environments. For instance, Slamet (2024) noted that learners valued ChatGPT for its quick feedback and vocabulary assistance, which increased their confidence and independence. However, these learners also voiced concerns about linguistic errors in less-resourced languages and the lack of voice and cultural diversity in AI-generated texts. Similarly, Versini et al. (2025) found that ChatGPT helped learners of Arabic, Chinese, French, and Spanish improve their structural accuracy and vocabulary diversity, but did not enhance cultural authenticity or pragmatic nuance. These limitations indicate that ChatGPT works best as a collaborative support tool, not a replacement for human interaction or culturally grounded teaching.

However, even though ChatGPT provides interactive, real-time support, it is mainly trained on English and often favors English-centric norms, potentially marginalizing less-resourced languages. Such a concern is important because it raises the question of whether GenAI truly helps learners access their full linguistic potential or unintentionally promotes monolingual and culturally narrow practices. Given these points, it is crucial to explore how learners interact with ChatGPT in language and literacy tasks. Without this investigation, the educational potential of GenAI in multilingual settings may stay limited, possibly reinforcing the very linguistic hierarchies that translanguaging aims to challenge.

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 Research design

This study employs an exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach (Hunter et al., 2019), using an open-ended questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured individual interviews to collect data. It examines learners' perspectives on ChatGPT as a translanguaging partner, how they incorporate it into their language learning practices, and the challenges they encounter. The exploratory design is appropriate given the limited empirical research on learners' experiences with GenAI in multilingual settings. Thus, this study maps emerging learner practices and identifies tensions and opportunities that may inform future theory development and pedagogical strategies.

### 5.2 Context and participants

The study was conducted in the Philippines, a linguistically diverse context where at least 100 distinct languages are spoken across different regions (McFarland, 2004). The second and third authors are currently teaching at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country.

Because the second and third authors were affiliated with different HEIs, participant recruitment relied on a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. The sampling was considered convenient because the teachers themselves invited their own students. It was also purposive because recruitment targeted students who met the following criteria: (a) had been using GenAI tools for language learning for at least one year, (b) were enrolled as university students, and (c) were willing to complete an open-ended questionnaire or volunteer for a follow-up interview.

A total of 21 students (17 females and 4 males) completed the open-ended questionnaire, which was administered via Google Forms and distributed online through social media and email. These students majored in English Education and, at the time of the study, were all in their second year at the university. However, of these 21, only five participants volunteered to take part in follow-up semi-

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structured interviews. All participants were between 18 and 22 years old and reported using GenAI tools, particularly ChatGPT, for more than one year.

As for the linguistic background, 15 of the 21 participants were from the northern Philippines and reported Tagalog as their first language. The remaining six participants were from the southern Philippines. This included five who reported Meranao as their first language and one who reported Maguindanaon as their first language. In addition to their first languages, participants reported using English in educational contexts, and their linguistic repertoires included varying combinations of their first languages, English, and Filipino.

Thus, the sample was appropriate for the exploratory and qualitative aims of the study, with the questionnaire providing a range of individual accounts and the interviews allowing more detailed elaboration of issues arising from those accounts.

### 5. 3 Ethical considerations

Before data collection, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study, and the confidential treatment of their responses. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before they participated in the questionnaire and follow-up interviews. No identifying information is reported in the manuscript.

Some participants were students of members of the research team. Recognizing the potential power imbalance associated with researcher–student relationships, we explicitly presented participation as voluntary and unrelated to students' academic assessment or standing. Students were informed that choosing not to participate, declining to answer particular questions, or withdrawing would have no consequences for their grades, classroom participation, or relationship with their instructors. Students were also not required to provide a reason for declining or withdrawing. Participation in the follow-up interviews was based on participants' own willingness to volunteer rather than being a course requirement.

At the time of the study, we did not obtain separate institutional ethical approval or formal exemption for the project. We acknowledge this limitation and have clarified the ethical procedures used to protect participants' autonomy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation during participants' recruitment.

### 5.4 Data collection and tools

The study used an open-ended questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured interviews to collect data. The questionnaire, written in English, consisted of four open-ended questions designed to elicit learners' experiences, practices, and reflections on using ChatGPT in English language learning. These questions focused on how learners use ChatGPT, how they integrate it into their regular language-learning activities, how they decide to rely on ChatGPT rather than their own language resources, and the challenges they encounter when using the tool in multilingual settings. The same questions were used as an interview guide to ensure continuity between the questionnaire and interview data, while still allowing space for probing, clarification, and elaboration during the interviews. These questions are as follows:

a. Can you describe how you use ChatGPT in English language learning?
b. In what ways do you incorporate ChatGPT into your regular language-learning activities or strategies (e.g., studying vocabulary, practicing writing, checking understanding, etc.)?
c. What challenges have you faced when using ChatGPT in multilingual settings, such as misunderstandings, inaccurate responses, or issues with language switching?

Additionally, the follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted individually, online via Google Meet, and at participants' convenience. While the questionnaire was intended to elicit students'

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experiences and perceptions of using ChatGPT in relation to their language learning, the follow-up interviews provided opportunities to explore these experiences in greater depth. These data sources enabled the study to address the research questions by identifying recurring patterns while also attending to the situated and linguistically diverse experiences through which participants described their engagement with ChatGPT.

Lastly, all interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate data collection. Although English was used as the primary language of the interviews, participants were allowed to draw on Filipino or other languages when expressing their thoughts. This created a comfortable interactional environment and enabled participants to articulate nuanced experiences that might not be easily expressed in English alone, especially regarding their multilingual practices and translanguaging experiences with ChatGPT.

### 5.5 Data analysis

After collecting data over approximately two months, the researchers manually transcribed all interview recordings. After transcription, participants reviewed their interview transcripts for accuracy. Each participant received their transcript and was given five days to suggest corrections, clarify statements, or request changes. This procedure ensured that participants' accounts were represented accurately.

The 21 open-ended questionnaire responses and five interview transcripts were then compiled into a single qualitative dataset. The two sources were analyzed together because the interviews elaborated on participants' experiences and perspectives reported in the questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire and interview data were not treated as two separate datasets with separate coding schemes. They were considered complementary sources of qualitative evidence, allowing the researchers to identify patterns across the dataset while also attending to the more detailed accounts provided in the interviews.

Moreover, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The analysis was primarily inductive, meaning that codes and themes were developed from participants' responses rather than imposed in advance. In addition, the researchers then coded the data manually. The analysis began with repeated reading of the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts to become familiar with the dataset and identify potentially relevant features. The researchers then generated initial codes that captured recurring or meaningful aspects of participants' experiences in relation to the research questions. These codes were subsequently compared across questionnaire and interview responses, and related codes were grouped into preliminary themes. The researchers then reviewed the emerging themes against the dataset to assess whether they coherently represented the coded extracts and whether sufficient distinction existed between themes. The researchers then refined, defined, and named the themes before synthesizing them in relation to the research questions and the study's translanguaging perspective.

Throughout the analytic process, the researchers met to discuss coding, compare interpretations, and examine areas of agreement and disagreement in the emerging themes. These discussions helped the researchers consider how their interpretations shaped the analysis and refine the final thematic structure.

## 6 Findings

Drawing on interview transcripts and survey responses, the findings show how English language learners integrate ChatGPT into their academic and linguistic practices in multilingual educational contexts. Three interrelated themes emerged: *ChatGPT as a multilingual learning resource*; *translanguaging and the negotiation of linguistic repertoires*; and *challenges and tensions in multilingual GenAI-mediated learning*.

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### 6.1 ChatGPT as a multilingual resource for language learning

Participants consistently described ChatGPT as a flexible and supportive tool that addresses gaps in English proficiency and academic confidence. Its use extends beyond surface-level correction to broader forms of linguistic and cognitive scaffolding.

#### *6.1.1 Writing refinement and grammar support*

A dominant use of ChatGPT involves grammar correction, sentence refinement, and holistic evaluation of academic writing. Participants positioned the tool as both a corrective and reflective resource that supports self-monitoring of language use. For example, one interview participant explained:

> "Nowadays, sir, I often use ChatGPT, especially for language learning and academic work. In language learning, I usually rely on ChatGPT to help me correct my grammar. On the other hand, for academic work, I turn to ChatGPT when I feel hesitant or unsure about my writing. I somehow use it to evaluate and review my work." (P1).

Survey data strongly echoed this practice, emphasizing clarity and academic tone:

> "I use ChatGPT to support my language learning through checking any grammatical error in my work, refining my sentence structure, and making sure that my academic writing/works sounds clear and correct." (Q2)

Moreover, some participants also highlighted ChatGPT's perceived advantage over other grammar-checking tools:

> "I often use ChatGPT for grammar checking since it provides a comprehensive feedback of my grammatical errors and explains the error I committed. Moreover, it shows what rules I should follow which I find lacking in some grammar checker like Grammarly." (Q14)

#### *6.1.2 Content simplification and conceptual understanding*

Another prominent function of ChatGPT is simplifying complex academic texts and theoretical concepts. Participants reported turning to the tool when encountering dense or technical language, particularly in theoretical frameworks. One interview participant noted:

> "I tend to use ChatGPT more than Google because it gives quick and direct answers to my questions. I usually rely on it when I encounter concepts that I do not fully understand, especially theoretical terms used in our framework. For example, when I come across theories or concepts with complex and unfamiliar language, I ask ChatGPT to explain them in the simplest possible terms." (P3).

Questionnaire responses similarly emphasized simplification and summarization as key strategies. This is evident in the following excerpt:

> "If I encounter unfamiliar words, I ask ChatGPT for its meaning, and when I struggle to understand a text, I ask to summarize or explain it in simpler words, and it helps me to understand it better." (Q9)

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### *6.1.3 Vocabulary and literacy support*

Participants also used ChatGPT to expand vocabulary, identify synonyms, and contextualize unfamiliar or "deep" English terms, especially in writing and literature-related tasks. As one interview participant explained:

> "For me, sir, aside from using it for texts or answering questions, I also use ChatGPT for English language learning to find synonyms for certain words. When I want to describe my stance more clearly and avoid repeating the same words, I find this challenging. Because of this, I turn to ChatGPT to provide alternative words that help me explain my position more effectively in my essay" (P4).

Survey responses reinforced this function, particularly when conventional dictionaries were perceived as insufficient:

> "For vocabulary study, I ask ChatGPT to provide word lists, sample sentences, and simple explanations that help me remember new terms." (Q1)

### *6.1.4 Strategic study aids*

Beyond immediate language queries, participants described using ChatGPT as a strategic academic support tool. These practices included generating study reviewers, summarizing lengthy texts, and preparing for performance-based tasks. One participant shared:

> "I use ChatGPT for language learning activities, particularly for specific tasks. For example, if there is an activity in one of our subjects, such as a mock job interview, I ask ChatGPT to provide possible interview questions. After that, I also ask for a sample or possible answers to use as a guide." (P1).

Questionnaire respondents similarly highlighted task-oriented uses:

> "The purpose of ChatGPT is to help users complete tasks such as essays, coding, emails, and more. Students can make the best use of ChatGPT in their writing assignments since this technology can generate research ideas or writing outline." (Q8)

## 6.2 Negotiating linguistic repertoires and translanguaging

Participants' accounts revealed that ChatGPT use occurs within multilingual realities rather than monolingual English-only spaces. Learners actively moved between English, Filipino (Tagalog), and local languages to support meaning-making.

### *6.2.1 Language switching for precision*

Several participants described switching to Filipino when English lexical gaps prevented them from expressing ideas precisely. This practice reflects strategic translanguaging rather than linguistic deficiency. One participant explained:

> "When I find it difficult to express certain ideas or English terms, I switch to Filipino. So far, ChatGPT understands Filipino well. For example, I may ask for an explanation in English, but along the way, when I struggle with specific English terms, I explain them in Filipino, sometimes using Filipinglish or purely Filipino." (P3).

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Survey respondents described similar practices:

> "I use ChatGPT when I don't understand some words or can't express or translate my thoughts and ideas in English." (Q10)

#### *6.2.2 Bridging understanding through translation*

ChatGPT also serves as a translational bridge, allowing learners to access English academic content in their first language. As one participant noted:

> "I cannot really express myself well in English, so I resort to Filipino when interacting with ChatGPT. Basically, sir, when I ask ChatGPT questions, I let it respond, and when I prompt it in Tagalog or Filipino, it often gives Taglish responses. This really helps bridge my understanding of certain concepts, as I am using my L1, Tagalog." (P5).

This practice was also evident in questionnaire responses:

> "I used ChatGPT for English grammar structure and sometimes ask for something or some words that I don't understand to translate them more understandable." (Q10)

### 6.3 Challenges in multilingual learning contexts

Despite its perceived benefits, participants identified several limitations and tensions when using ChatGPT in multilingual settings.

#### *6.3.1 Limited sensitivity to local languages*

A major concern involved ChatGPT's difficulty processing non-standardized local languages, such as Maranao or Bisaya. Participants reported inaccurate translations and overly generalized responses. One participant explained:

> "Yes, sir. For me, the main challenges I have encountered when using ChatGPT in multilingual settings relate to misunderstandings and inaccurate translations, as well as its limited sensitivity to linguistic diversity. For instance, since I am not very fluent in the Ranao language, having been born and raised in Cotabato City and only moving to Marawi for my studies, I often feel curious about the meaning of certain conversations. Because of this, I use ChatGPT to translate them into English or Filipino. However, there are times when ChatGPT cannot accurately translate some words or expressions." (P2).

Survey respondents similarly described frustration with vague outputs:

> "ChatGPT is not always accurate and specific. It provides different information that is sometimes not what I'm looking for. In short, it's so broad to the point all data is vague." (Q10)

#### *6.3.2 Pressure to rely on English and over-reliance concerns*

Participants also reported feeling pressured to rely primarily on English when interacting with ChatGPT, due to concerns about accuracy when using other languages. As one participant observed:

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> "From what I have observed, when I mix languages while asking ChatGPT, it sometimes gives inaccurate responses or fails to respond to the question or prompt at all. Because of this, I feel that I cannot fully use my entire linguistic repertoire. It also puts pressure on me to rely mainly on English, since it seems to be the first or main language that ChatGPT understands." (P4).

Questionnaire data further revealed anxieties about dependency and authorship:

> "One challenge is making sure that I do not rely on ChatGPT too much and still develop confidence in my own language skills. It's tempting to always have ChatGPT do my work but at the same time, I know that if I rely too much, then I am not helping myself." (Q24)

#### *6.3.3 Cultural and pragmatic limitations*

Finally, participants noted that ChatGPT often struggles with cultural and pragmatic nuances, resulting in feedback that is linguistically polished but contextually limited. One participant reflected:

> "I type my essay and, before submitting it to Google Classroom, I ask ChatGPT to review it holistically. It is not only about checking grammar or technical aspects of the essay, but also about examining the meaning it conveys. However, I also notice certain limitations or biases in ChatGPT's feedback, since it is an artificial intelligence and cannot fully grasp the pragmatic intentions or contextual nuances behind my writing" (P5).

This perception was echoed in the questionnaire:

> "But most of the time, I prefer my ideas because sometimes ChatGPT gives generic answers that obviously does not have the touch of a human soul." (Q16)

## 7 Discussion

This study examines how Filipino university students use ChatGPT in their learning practices, with particular attention to translanguaging and multilingual meaning-making. The findings reinforce and extend recent scholarship that frames ChatGPT not simply as a technical tool for language correction but as a mediational resource embedded in learners' multilingual, academic, and affective practices. At the same time, the findings suggest an important dimension of critical GenAI literacy. Participants did not simply accept AI-generated responses as authoritative. They also questioned their accuracy and relevance, recognized limitations in ChatGPT's treatment of local languages and cultural meanings, expressed concerns about overreliance, and sometimes preferred their own ideas to generic AI-generated responses. These practices suggest that critical GenAI literacy involves learners' capacity to question, evaluate, negotiate, and make decisions about AI-generated language and knowledge.

A notable example is participants' frequent use of ChatGPT for grammar checking, writing refinement, and comprehensive text evaluation. This aligns with earlier research on GenAI in language education, which highlights automated feedback, reduced anxiety, and opportunities for independent practice (Chen, 2024; Kuddus, 2022; Lin et al., 2023). However, participants used ChatGPT beyond surface-level correction, viewing it as a reflective resource that could support self-monitoring, metalinguistic awareness, and academic confidence. At the same time, using ChatGPT to assess whether writing is grammatically correct, clear, or appropriately academic raises questions about linguistic authority. Although AI-generated suggestions may become one source learners use to evaluate what constitutes acceptable academic English, ChatGPT does not necessarily determine their linguistic choices, but its feedback may influence how learners negotiate linguistic norms, echoing concerns that

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GenAI-mediated feedback can reproduce or naturalize dominant linguistic norms (Helm et al., 2024; Ulla et al., 2024).

Participants also used ChatGPT to simplify content, summarize information, explain complex theories, and prepare for academic tasks. These practices align with emerging views of GenAI as a mediator of academic literacy that can support comprehension and more confident engagement with dense academic content (Donley, 2024; Slamet, 2024; Zhou et al., 2026). From a translanguaging perspective, such use reflects learners' efforts to bridge disciplinary discourse and their existing linguistic resources, supporting access and meaning-making (Wei, 2018; Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024). At the same time, simplification creates a tension between accessibility and dependence. Repeated reliance on AI-generated explanations may mediate students' engagement with complex ideas through algorithmic interpretation rather than their own reading and thinking. Participants' concerns about overreliance, including Q2's concern that excessive use of ChatGPT could undermine their language development, suggest an awareness of this tension. Such concerns are relevant to critical GenAI literacy because they show learners evaluating not only the usefulness of AI-generated output but also whether relying on it supports or undermines their longer-term learning (Ulla et al., 2023b).

The findings further highlight how learners negotiate their multilingual repertoires when interacting with ChatGPT. Participants moved among English, Filipino, Taglish, and local languages to support comprehension, expression, and task completion. These practices reflect the flexible use of linguistic resources described in translanguaging scholarship (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; MacSwan, 2019) and align with Yu et al. (2025), who describe learners' strategic language shifting to support comprehension and meaning-making. In the present study, students used Filipino or Taglish when English did not allow them to express an idea precisely or when they needed to clarify an unfamiliar concept. Thus, translanguaging remained an important resource within GenAI-mediated learning.

However, these practices also reveal an important ambivalence. Some participants reported feeling pressure to rely more heavily on English because they perceived ChatGPT as less reliable when responding to mixed-language prompts or local languages. P3's use of Filipino as a resource coexisted with a desire to practice English, while P4 explicitly described pressure to rely mainly on English. This tension was particularly visible in participants' experiences with languages such as *Maranao* and *Bisaya*. One participant described inaccurate translations and difficulty with words or expressions that lacked direct equivalents, while another reported that mixed-language prompts could produce inaccurate or incomplete responses. These experiences are consistent with broader concerns about the representation of minoritized languages in digital technologies and GenAI systems (Mohamed et al., 2020; Helm et al., 2024; Ulla et al., 2024). Additionally, this study does not systematically test ChatGPT's performance across languages and therefore cannot establish objective differences in its linguistic capabilities. The findings instead show how students perceived these limitations and how those perceptions shaped their linguistic choices.

These tensions also demonstrate that translanguaging and critical GenAI literacy are closely connected. Learners' multilingual repertoires provide more than a means of communicating with ChatGPT. They also provide resources for evaluating what ChatGPT produces. When participants switched languages to clarify meaning, compared responses with their own knowledge, or recognized that a translation did not adequately capture a local expression, they drew on their linguistic and contextual knowledge to assess AI-generated output. Thus, multilingual meaning-making can also become a form of critical engagement with GenAI.

This critical engagement is particularly evident in participants' responses to generic or contextually inappropriate feedback. One participant noted that ChatGPT could not fully grasp the pragmatic intentions or contextual nuances behind their writing (P5). Another explained, "But most of the time, I prefer my ideas because sometimes ChatGPT gives generic answers that obviously do not have the touch of a human soul" (Q16). These accounts show that participants evaluated AI-generated language against their own communicative intentions and contextual knowledge. They did not necessarily

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equate linguistic fluency with communicative adequacy. Instead, they retained their own ideas when AI-generated alternatives appeared too generic. Learners were therefore not simply recipients of AI-generated language but participants who negotiated its relevance and value.

These practices also illustrate several dimensions of critical GenAI literacy. Participants questioned AI-generated responses when they appeared inaccurate, vague, or insufficiently contextualized. They evaluated outputs against their own linguistic and contextual knowledge and negotiated suggestions according to their particular purposes. In some cases, they rejected AI-generated responses in favor of their own ideas. Their concerns about overreliance also suggest that they reflected on the consequences of accepting GenAI assistance too readily. Critical GenAI literacy in this context extends beyond the technical ability to operate ChatGPT. It involves making situated judgments about the accuracy, relevance, linguistic appropriateness, cultural situatedness, and educational value of AI-generated output.

Therefore, the findings suggest that ChatGPT's educational significance cannot be understood solely by what it produces. It also depends on how learners respond. In this study, students used ChatGPT to support comprehension, writing, vocabulary development, and academic tasks, while also questioning its accuracy, recognizing its limitations, and negotiating its suggestions. This positions critical GenAI literacy not as a separate competence added to multilingual learning, but as part of how learners navigate AI-mediated meaning-making. In multilingual contexts, this process is particularly significant because learners can draw on multiple linguistic and cultural resources when evaluating AI-generated language and knowledge.

The findings have several pedagogical implications. In other words, instead of positioning ChatGPT as an authoritative model of academic language, teachers can use it as a dialogic and reflective resource. Students can compare ChatGPT responses generated through English, Filipino, Taglish, and regional languages and examine differences in vocabulary, explanations, examples, and cultural references. They can identify generic or culturally inappropriate responses and revise them using locally relevant knowledge. Comparing an AI-generated English version with students' multilingual explanations can further help them consider what meanings or culturally specific understandings may change, be simplified, or be lost. Such activities can encourage students to question standardized English norms rather than treating AI-generated English as an unquestioned model.

However, the study is limited by its focus on a specific group of Filipino university students, which may restrict the transferability of findings to other sociolinguistic and institutional contexts. The reliance on self-reported practices and perceptions also limits what can be concluded about how students actually interact with ChatGPT during real-time academic tasks. In addition, the study centers on ChatGPT as a single GenAI platform and does not systematically compare its outputs across languages. Future research could combine learners' accounts with task-based analysis of AI-generated responses across English, Filipino, and local languages. Longitudinal research could further examine whether sustained interaction with GenAI changes learners' translanguaging practices, their reliance on English, and their capacity to critically evaluate AI-generated language and knowledge.

## 8 Conclusion

This study explored how ChatGPT supports or constrains Filipino university students' multilingual meaning-making, their perceptions of its affordances and limitations, and their experiences navigating GenAI-mediated support across languages. The findings suggest that ChatGPT can serve as a collaborative and mediational resource when embedded in translanguaging-oriented pedagogy.

At the same time, the findings caution against the uncritical adoption of GenAI in multilingual language education. Without deliberate pedagogical mediation, English-centric biases and generic outputs may constrain the very multilingual practices that translanguaging seeks to legitimize. Thus, the study highlights the importance of teacher mediation and critical GenAI literacy in helping learners

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interrogate AI-generated outputs, recognize linguistic and cultural bias, and make informed decisions about when to accept, modify, supplement, or reject GenAI suggestions.

In practice, critical GenAI literacy can be developed through activities that position students as critical users, and not as passive recipients of AI-generated language. For example, teachers can ask students to enter the same prompt in English, Filipino, and a regional language and compare how ChatGPT responds across languages. Students can then identify differences in vocabulary, explanations, examples, cultural references, and the amount or quality of information provided. A related activity can also involve asking students to identify generic or culturally inappropriate examples in AI-generated responses and revise them using locally relevant people, places, practices, or knowledge. Teachers can also ask students to compare an AI-generated English version with their own multilingual explanation and discuss what meanings, identities, or culturally specific concepts the English version changes, simplifies, or loses. Such activities can encourage students to question standardized English norms and not treat AI-generated English as an unquestioned linguistic model.

Furthermore, these activities can be organized around an "accept, modify, or reject" decision-making process. Students can evaluate a GenAI response for linguistic accuracy, cultural relevance, usefulness, and alignment with their intended meaning before deciding whether to accept, modify, or reject it. This positions ChatGPT not simply as a corrective tool but as an object of critical inquiry and a resource for developing metalinguistic awareness, where its educational potential lies not in producing "better" English, but in mediating understanding, expanding access to complex disciplinary content, and supporting learners' agency in drawing on their multilingual repertoires. Such use requires pedagogical designs that critically and ethically attend to linguistic diversity, local knowledge, and learners' identities.

## AI Declaration Statement

The authors declare that they used GenAI tools such as Grammarly, Quillbot, and ChatGPT to tighten language and improve the clarity and coherence of the manuscript. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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***Mark Bedoya Ulla*** is an Associate Professor and Head of Research at the Research Center for Language Teaching and Learning, Walailak University, Thailand. He finished his Doctor of Communication degree from the University of the Philippines and his PhD in Language Education at Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines. His research interests include technology in language teaching, queer teacher migration, queer intercultural communication, language teacher identity, critical applied linguistics, and gender in language education.

***Kenneth Ian B. Barrera*** is the Head of the Research and Instructional Innovation Department at Saint Michael College of Caraga, Philippines, where he spearheads institutional research outputs and faculty capacity-building in teaching and learning. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in English with a concentration in Literature from the University of San Jose-Recoletos. His research interests span literary and cultural narratives, flexible learning modalities, literacy interventions, curriculum evaluation, and educational technology.

***Joshua Eriberto Miguel G. Llames*** is a graduate of the Master of Arts in Education and Doctor of Philosophy in English. He mentors teacher education students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at Laguna State Polytechnic University, College of Teacher Education. Presently, he serves as the research and publication unit head.

***Rejoice Immanuel Eljoen Merelos*** is a lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Khon Kaen University, Thailand. He holds an MA in Pastoral Counseling (cum laude) from the Asian Theological Seminary and a Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language from Chiang Mai University. His research interests lie at the intersection of Linguistics, Transnational Identity, and Thai Soft Power, with a focus on Translanguaging and language acquisition.

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