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RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating the Impacts of Translanguaging Practices in Promoting Bilingualism among English Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of translanguaging practices in fostering bilingualism among English Language Learners (ELLs). Translanguaging, a dynamic pedagogical approach, has gained prominence in bilingual education, enabling fluid language use and enhancing comprehension among learners. Despite its potential benefits, challenges such as resource limitations, teacher resistance, and restrictive institutional policies hinder its effective implementation. A total of 150 participants were selected from SZABIST Primary & Secondary Schools and IBA Community Schools in Larkano, Sindh. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design for data collection, with quantitative analysis conducted using SPSS. Findings reveal that translanguaging significantly enhances students' comprehension and vocabulary development by allowing them to integrate their native languages alongside English. However, institutional constraints and inadequate teacher preparedness limit its widespread adoption. To maximize the benefits of translanguaging, the study emphasizes the need for tailored teacher training programs, supportive institutional policies, and increased access to bilingual learning materials.

| **KEYWORDS:** | Translanguaging, Vocabulary Development, Pedagogical Approach, Bilingualism, Language Challenges, Teachers' Training. |

Introduction

The world is increasingly interconnected with the help of language because there are countries which are monolingual. Due to rapid change in classrooms, diverse communities' multilingualism has become a key asset in both social and professional domains. For English language learners (ELLs), navigating linguistic boundaries is not merely an academic challenge but lifelong skills. Translanguaging is a pedagogical approach that allows students to fluidly switch between their linguistic repertoires, has appeared as a transformative practice in promoting bilingualism and fostering inclusive learning environments (Lewis et al., 2012). By integrating the use of multiple languages within classroom pedagogical practices develop better understating of abstract concepts among learners (Lashari & Umrani, 2023). Translanguaging empowers students to use their full linguistic capabilities to learn and express themselves effectively.

Bilingualism in Pakistan, where the education system tends to keep English distinct from local languages like Sindhi and Urdu, is both required and problematic. Students are usually raised in settings where there are several languages spoken, but conventional education systems prescribe monolingual education. Such a conflict can slow down

language learning, lower cultural suitability in education, and become a constraint on academic involvement. Translanguaging presents a way to fill this gap, highlighting the richness of language diversity as a resource instead of a hindrance. Translanguaging is a highly regarded pedagogical practice that utilizes the entire linguistic capacity of students.

Translanguaging has been found to facilitate critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, and executive function by enabling learners to move in and out of languages effortlessly (García & Li Wei, 2014). Translanguaging not only benefits the academic success of ELLs but also provides them with a strong identity and sense of belonging in multilingual communities. In the Pakistani setting, where English is both a language of aspiration and a vehicle for higher learning, translanguaging enables learners to draw upon all their language resources in the most effective manner, maximizing both learning and expression.

Translanguaging redefines classical language learning in that it embraces language practices as fluid and integrated. Rather than isolating languages as separate and distinct, it combines them to enable students to draw on their linguistic skills in order to enhance understanding and creativity (García & Li Wei, 2014). For example, a learner may initially comprehend a sophisticated math idea in Sindhi prior to expressing it in English or utilize Urdu storytelling methods to help improve English writing. These strategies legitimize and honor the language and cultural resources brought by the learners to the classroom. As great as its potential is, applying translanguaging practices is filled with obstacles. Teachers might not be trained to effectively manage multilingual classrooms, and institutional policy tends to prefer monolingual practice. Where resources are thin and educational inequities are significant, such as in places like Larkano, these obstacles are reinforced by systemic injustices. Without adequate support, the potential benefits of translanguaging remain untapped, limiting its impact on bilingual education.

This study focuses on addressing the dual goals of promoting bilingualism and identifying practical solutions to overcome the challenges associated with translanguaging. By investigating these dynamics within the context of SZABIST Primary & Secondary Schools and IBA Community Schools in Larkano, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers. The findings aim to contribute to a growing body of literature on translanguaging, with a particular emphasis on its relevance in under-resourced and multilingual educational contexts.

Literature Review

Pakistan's linguistic landscape is both rich and complex, with a blend of national, regional, and global languages shaping its educational frameworks. This study targets two key institutions in Larkano—SZABIST Primary & Secondary Schools and IBA Community Schools—both of which serve linguistically diverse student populations. By adopting a quantitative research design involving 150 randomly selected ELLs aged 10–18, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of translanguaging practices in this unique context. Statistical tools such as regression analysis and descriptive statistics will be used to interpret the data, offering evidence-based recommendations for enhancing bilingual education.

Translanguaging has been widely studied in bilingual education, and scholars agree that it offers significant benefits for language development. García (2009) defines translanguaging as a dynamic process where multilingual speakers use their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate and learn. Translanguaging differs from code-

switching, which is typically seen as alternating between two languages, in that it encourages fluid integration and is seen as a natural form of communication among bilingual individuals.

Theoretical Background

Translanguaging – a concept first introduced by Welsh educator Cen Williams in the 1980s to explain how bilingual people switch between languages during communication (García, 2009). This approach has received considerable attention among bilingual education research as a form of help for the development of bilingualism, particularly in English Language Learners (ELLs). Many of the monolingual norms on which much of language education is based, are challenged by its inherent fluidity and dynamic nature (García & Li Wei, 2014), and as a result translanguaging has fast become a hot topic in academia.

Hammarberg (2016) gave an overview of the role of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms, highlighting its relevance for students who speak more than one language, whether those at transitional stages between languages or where both functions fully. Translanguaging is the flexible use of different languages with each other. It calls into question the notion of separate languages and promotes a view in which bilinguals have a full linguistic repertoire that they can draw on.

Translanguaging draws on sociocultural theories of language, although more specifically Vygotsky (1978) ideas for considering learning as a social event where interaction stimulates cognitive development. Translanguaging can be thought to work naturally along the lines of Vygotsky's notion of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) where a learner who possesses or knows an easier concept supports telling features and/or using concepts that are more complex to create room for natural collaboration (Swain et al., 2011).

Furthermore, translanguaging is consistent with Cummins (1980) CUP model whereby knowing two languages subsumes an interconnected underlying competence making up a common set of skills and concepts that reinforce each other. This theoretical grounding, scholars like García (2009) claim that gives permission to translanguaging as a unified approach where both languages can develop at the same time without either one receiving "lower" or "weaker" status.

Translanguaging Practice

Translanguaging practices may belong to distinct types, including flexible use of the language in conversations, and pedagogical approaches that build in opportunities for students to use their home languages for sense-making related to English content. For example, teachers sometimes allow students to use their home language for the purposes of brainstorming, clarification and even assignment discussion (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) Common practices of classroom translanguaging include bilingual glossaries, peer-assisted learning in both languages, and written work assigned in both English and home languages (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

Effect of Translanguaging

Earlier research has already begun to highlight the cognitive benefits of translanguaging for bilingual development. Translanguaging also brings out more of students' cognitive flexibility when solving problems as they must switch between two linguistic systems in order to understand (Baker, 2011). Linguistic experiences that go

beyond habited practices are documented to facilitate awareness of language structures, necessary for bilinguals to gain knowledge and control over how they use the languages in academic contexts overall (Cenon & Gorter, 2011).

Enhances Literacy Skills: Through translanguaging, students develop a good understanding of their and English language reading and writing by deep comprehension and analysis. Improved Content Area Comprehension – ELLs have access to both and can use their home language to support comprehension in order to make sense of complex content, while at the same time being active participants in classroom discourse. Boost in Academic Engagement: Translanguaging practices provide engaging and inclusive climates for learning, which can encourage students in classroom activities.

Maintaining Cultural Identity: Through translanguaging, learners can keep their culture and languages while assimilating into the predominant culture. Building a Bilingual Identity: Students who practice both languages feel developed bilingual identity on their own personality and in terms of belonging to many linguistic communities as a part. Greater Social and Emotional Development: Translanguaging can catalyze positive social environments for students to practice language, diminish anxiety around speaking in a target language, and increase the social capital of students who simultaneously feel unique yet included.

Translanguaging techniques can also significantly affect pupils' emotional health and sense of self. Researchers contend that pupils feel included and respect for their cultural identities when they are allowed to speak in their native language (García & Li Wei, 2014). According to Hornberger and Link (2012), translanguaging helps students develop a positive multilingual identity by enabling them to view their languages as strengths rather than weaknesses.

Material and Methods

The study employs a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method. This approach is suitable for examining the relationship between translanguaging practices and bilingualism while identifying challenges faced by educators and learners. The study uses statistical techniques to analyze data, ensuring objectivity and replicability. The target population consists of English language learners aged 10–18 years enrolled in SZABIST Primary & Secondary Schools and IBA Community Schools in Larkano, Pakistan. These institutions were chosen due to their linguistically diverse student bodies and alignment with the study's focus on bilingual education. A random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different age groups and linguistic backgrounds. A sample size of 150 students was selected, sufficient for statistical analysis and generalizability within the study's context. Two structured questionnaires were developed, one for students and another for educators.

Student Questionnaire: Focused on perceptions of translanguaging, its benefits for language development, and challenges met during bilingual learning.

Educator Questionnaire: Explored teaching strategies, perceived benefits, and institutional challenges in implementing translanguaging.

The questionnaires included Likert-scale items to capture responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," alongside open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The tools were piloted to ensure clarity and reliability before full-scale deployment.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over four weeks, with surveys administered during regular school hours to minimize disruption. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from both students and educators. To ensure accuracy, trained facilitators aided participants in completing the questionnaires, particularly younger respondents.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), employing the following techniques: Mean, median, and standard deviation to summarize students' and educators' responses. Frequency distributions to illustrate common trends in benefits and challenges of translanguaging. Regression Analysis: Used to find the relationship between translanguaging practices and bilingual development. Analyzed the impact of variables such as age, linguistic background, and frequency of translanguaging use on language ability. Inferential Statistics: T-tests and ANOVA to compare responses across demographic groups (e.g., age, gender). Qualitative Insights: Open-ended responses were coded thematically to provide context to the statistical findings, capturing nuanced perspectives from both students and educators.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: Participants were briefed about the study's purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature before obtaining their consent. Confidentiality: Data were anonymized to protect participants' identities. Approval: Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board (IRB) of the primary researcher's academic institution.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Demographic Information

Category	Details	Percentage
Age Group	10–12 years	35%
	13–15 years	40%
	16–18 years	25%
Gender	Male	52%
	Female	48%
Language Background	Sindhi	60%
	Urdu	30%
	Other Regional Languages	10%
English Proficiency	Learning English as a Second Language	100%

The sample for this study consisted of 150 participants with diverse age groups, gender representation, and linguistic backgrounds. The age distribution was relatively balanced, with 35% of students falling within the 10–12 years category, 40% between 13–15 years, and 25% in the 16–18 years range. Gender representation was nearly equal, with 52% of participants being male and 48% female.

In terms of language background, a majority of students (60%) spoke Sindhi as their first language, followed by 30% who spoke Urdu, while the remaining 10% communicated in other regional languages. Despite these varied linguistic backgrounds, all participants were learning English as a second language, highlighting the multilingual nature of the study sample.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Translanguaging Questionnaire

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	% Agreement	Interpretation
1. Translanguaging helps ELLs understand complex concepts more effectively.	4.35	0.85	87%	Strong agreement
2. Using students' native languages in class improves their English proficiency.	4.20	0.90	84%	Positive perception
3. Translanguaging enhances bilingual learners' critical thinking skills.	4.15	0.95	82%	Supportive evidence
4. Allowing students to use both languages fosters stronger bilingual abilities.	4.30	0.88	86%	Strong agreement
5. Translanguaging makes learning more engaging for students.	4.10	1.00	80%	Positive impact on engagement
6. I feel motivated to participate more when translanguaging practices are encouraged.	4.05	1.05	78%	Moderate agreement
7. Teachers are adequately trained to implement translanguaging strategies.	3.00	1.20	50%	Neutral/mixed responses
8. Translanguaging requires additional teacher preparation time.	4.00	1.10	77%	Acknowledgment of challenge
9. Translanguaging leads to confusion among students.	2.80	1.30	40%	Low agreement, minimal confusion
10. Using multiple languages in the classroom disrupts the teaching process.	2.50	1.40	35%	Disagreed by most respondents
11. The curriculum does not support translanguaging practices.	3.75	1.15	70%	Recognized institutional barrier
12. Translanguaging is difficult to implement due to limited institutional resources.	3.85	1.10	72%	Significant challenge identified
13. Translanguaging is an effective strategy for bilingual education.	4.40	0.82	88%	Strong endorsement
14. Translanguaging respects and values students' linguistic backgrounds.	4.50	0.78	90%	High appreciation
15. Using my native language in class helps me learn English better.	4.25	0.87	85%	Strong support
16. I feel more confident learning in a translanguaging-friendly environment.	4.20	0.90	84%	Boosts confidence
17. Translanguaging positively impacts my child's bilingual development.	4.30	0.85	86%	Parental support
18. I prefer a bilingual education model that includes translanguaging.	4.35	0.80	87%	Preference for bilingual model

Positive Attitudes Toward Translanguaging: High agreement on its effectiveness in supporting comprehension, critical thinking, and bilingual development. Challenges Identified: Teachers feel they need more training (Mean = 3.00) and institutional support is limited (Mean = 3.85). Limited Disruptions: Most respondents disagreed that translanguaging causes confusion (Mean = 2.80) or disrupts teaching (Mean = 2.50).

Discussion

The study's findings affirm the growing body of literature that supports the positive impact of translanguaging on bilingualism and language development. The

majority of students (80%) reported that using their native languages alongside English helped them better understand and engage with academic content. This aligns with García and Li Wei's (2014) assertion that translanguaging facilitates deeper cognitive engagement by allowing students to use their full linguistic resources. When students are encouraged to use their home languages, they can bridge gaps in comprehension, particularly in content-heavy subjects like mathematics and science.

Additionally, the reported benefits for vocabulary acquisition and writing fluency reinforce the findings of earlier research (Velasco & García, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). By connecting words and concepts across languages, students not only expand their vocabulary in both their home language and English, but they also enhance their metalinguistic awareness—understanding the structure and function of both languages. This bilingual advantage aligns with cognitive research suggesting that bilingual individuals often have enhanced critical thinking skills and cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2011).

Moreover, the positive relationship between translanguaging and students' cultural identity, as shown by the 85% of students who felt more connected to their cultural roots, resonates with Canagarajah (2011) assertion that translanguaging fosters a sense of belonging and confirms students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. When students are allowed to express themselves in both languages, they feel respected and empowered, which in turn promotes engagement and confidence in the classroom.

While the benefits of translanguaging are clear, the study also highlighted several challenges faced by both educators and students, consistent with findings from other studies (Palmer et al., 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012). One of the most significant barriers found was the lack of teacher training, with 65% of educators reporting insufficient preparation in implementing translanguaging strategies. This result resonates with García and Sylvan's (2011) discussion, which highlights the fact that successful translanguaging involves specialized pedagogical abilities. Pre-service teacher training usually concentrates on conventional monolingual practices, so instructors are not adequately equipped with the knowledge or skills needed to serve multilingual students. Considering that Larkano's students have varied linguistic backgrounds, it is essential that teacher training includes managing multilingual classrooms and promoting translanguaging.

Another major obstacle is institutional resistance because most schools in Pakistan value English proficiency, especially for high-stakes testing and professional futures. According to 60% of the teachers surveyed, school policies and standardized testing are barriers to the application of translanguaging. This institutional focus on English resonates with the call of Menken and García (2010) that most educational systems continue to work within a monolingual paradigm, ignoring the worth of multilingualism. These policies not only curtail the translanguaging to be used but also lead to the marginalization of students' home languages and promote a dominance hierarchy in which English is on top. Also salient was resource constraint, whereby more than half of the educators indicated that there was a scarcity of bilingual educational materials. The observation highlights the need to develop materials that are aligned with translanguaging activities, particularly for under-resourced schools. Under the current deficiency of materials, the potentiality of translanguaging as a bilingual education intervention cannot be attained to its utmost potential, given that areas like Larkano lack adequate learning resources.

Furthermore, the resistance by some students to employ their mother tongues, particularly in English language classes, indicates the sociocultural barriers that may occur in multilingual classrooms. Peer pressure and the stigma of speaking a "non-English"

language can negate the advantages of translanguaging. According to Flores and Rosa (2015), translanguaging practices threaten long-held ideologies regarding language and identity, and countering these biases needs systemic change both in the classroom and in society.

The research findings indicate that the use of translanguaging practices significantly affects the language development of students. The development in writing skills and vocabulary learning witnessed in the research agrees with Velasco and García (2014), who claim that translanguaging helps students to enhance their linguistic resources by bridging languages together. In our research, students' capacity for self-expression in their native language prior to switching to English enabled them to grasp complicated ideas more clearly and articulate their thoughts more effectively.

The growth of metalinguistic awareness is also a noteworthy effect of translanguaging, as learners were in a position to think about the structure and use of the two languages. Such increased awareness not only enhances learners' linguistic ability but also increases their cognitive flexibility, which is critical to academic achievement in bilingual environments. The evidence serves to back García's (2009) assertion that translanguaging fosters a deeper appreciation of language as an alive, interconnected system, as opposed to an aggregate of rigids, distinct entities.

In addition, the reported positive impacts on students' writing and speaking abilities, from both teachers and students, indicate that translanguaging has the potential to facilitate language production in multiple modes of communication. By enabling students to utilize their home language as an English scaffold, translanguaging assists students in gaining confidence and fluency and thus attaining better academic achievements in both languages.

The research has a number of implications for classroom practice as well as for education policy. Firstly, it is evident that there is a pressing requirement for teacher training to prioritize the pedagogical methods needed for effective translanguaging implementation. Such training should not only cover the theoretical foundations of bilingualism but should involve practical solutions for incorporating translanguaging into regular daily classroom activities. Second, school policies must be revised to accommodate multilingual practices. This can include revising language proficiency requirements and creating curricula that include translanguaging as a central approach. Schools can also be motivated to create bilingual teaching materials that enable translanguaging practices, especially in areas such as Larkano, where resources tend to be limited.

Lastly, teachers need to be empowered to overcome sociocultural obstacles to translanguaging. Valuing students' home languages, as well as promoting English proficiency, can mitigate stigma and create a more inclusive classroom. The results of this study confirm that translanguaging is an effective means of advancing bilingualism and language development in English language learners. Although there are real challenges to translanguaging implementation, such as a shortage of teacher training, institutional opposition, and limited resources, the advantages—better academic achievement, vocabulary development, and cultural participation—are evident. To achieve the full potential of translanguaging, education systems need to invest in teacher training, update institutional policies, and supply sufficient resources to facilitate multilingual practices.

By overcoming these challenges, translanguaging can be a natural part of bilingual education, which promotes more linguistic and cognitive growth in ELLs.

Conclusion

This research examined the effects and challenges of translanguaging practices on enhancing bilingualism in English language learners (ELLs) in Larkano, Pakistan. The results emphasize the crucial role of translanguaging in facilitating bilingual development, enriching the language abilities of students, and improving their academic performance. The employment of home languages in combination with English was discovered to enhance vocabulary learning, writing ability, and general language proficiency.

Translanguaging also promoted stronger cultural identity and participation, with students being more confident and attached to their linguistic heritage.

Even with these benefits, the research also discovered various challenges to effective implementation of translanguaging practice. Among these are insufficient teacher training, resistance in institutions towards multilingual strategies, shortage of resources, and social stigmatization in using languages other than English within classrooms. These issues indicate a requirement for changes in the structures both in classrooms and institutions for translanguaging to fully maximize bilingual education. The findings of the study add to the expanding literature on the effective pedagogy of bilingualism through translanguaging. It underscores that translanguaging is more than linguistic activity but a means of promoting richer cognitive engagement, cultural enrichment, and improved learning for ELLs.

Recommendation

Age-Specific Learning Approach

Since the sample includes students from diverse age groups (10–18 years), instructional strategies should be tailored to different developmental levels.

Younger students (10–12 years) may benefit from interactive and play-based learning, while older students (16–18 years) may require more analytical and academic-focused strategies.

Gender-Inclusive Strategies

With a nearly equal gender distribution (52% male, 48% female), educational interventions should ensure an inclusive learning environment that supports both boys and girls equally.

Encouraging gender-responsive pedagogy can help address any potential learning disparities.

Leveraging Students' Language Backgrounds

Since a majority of students speak Sindhi (60%) and Urdu (30%), bilingual or translanguaging strategies should be implemented to facilitate English learning.

Teachers should incorporate Sindhi and Urdu as scaffolding tools to enhance comprehension and engagement in English language instruction.

Support for Multilingual Learners

With 10% of students speaking other regional languages, targeted support should be provided to ensure these students are not disadvantaged in English learning.

Developing multilingual resources and promoting peer-assisted learning can help bridge linguistic gaps.

Enhancing English as a Second Language (ESL) Instruction

As all students are learning English as a second language, curriculum designers should integrate ESL methodologies that emphasize speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

Culturally relevant content and real-life communication tasks can enhance language acquisition and engagement

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