

**Understanding the perceptions of high school teachers about the application of
translanguaging.**

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Abstract

The present research focuses on Colombian English secondary school teachers' perceptions of translanguaging by analyzing how teachers perceive it as a linguistic practice within the context of their public school, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán School, located in Puerto Gaitán, Meta. The study addresses the challenges teachers face while working under monolingual teaching expectations and the actual language learning realities of their students. The research followed a qualitative instrumental case study approach using semi-structured interviews and document review as the main sources of data. The information collected was analyzed through an inductive coding process using ATLAS.ti software.

According to the findings, teachers perceive translanguaging as a form of pedagogical support that helps students understand content, clarify complex grammatical structures, and develop confidence and participation in the English classroom. At the same time, teachers expressed concerns about the overuse of Spanish, since they believe students' exposure to English should be maximized. Furthermore, the findings revealed that translanguaging is not explicitly addressed in institutional or governmental policies, which gives teachers methodological autonomy but little formal guidance regarding its implementation. Additionally, teachers' pedagogical decisions are strongly influenced by their professional experiences and the classroom contexts in which they work.

The findings suggest that translanguaging functions as a flexible and contextualized pedagogical practice that responds to the learning needs of students in public school settings.

Keywords:

translanguaging, teachers' perceptions, bilingual education, English teaching, pedagogical practices

Introduction

In Colombia, the implementation of bilingual education continues to face persistent challenges, particularly in public schools where approaches prevail and monolingual – oriented teaching practices still dominate English instruction (García Vásquez, 2020). These tendencies are reinforced by institutional and governmental policies that promote rigid curricular models, often restricting teachers' pedagogical autonomy, and influencing their perceptions of what bilingual education should look like. Within this context, translanguaging emerges as an alternative approach that contrasts sharply with monolingual practices. According to Otheguy et al. (2015), translanguaging refers to the flexible use of all linguistic resources available to speakers, challenging the notion of languages as a separate, compartmentalized system. As Garcia and Li Wei (2014) argue, this perspective highlights the integrated and dynamic nature of bilingual repertoires, inviting educators to reconsider long-term assumptions about language learning.

In the Jorge Eliecer Gaitán public school, located in the municipality of Puerto Gaitán, department of Meta, these tensions become particularly visible as teachers negotiate between institutional expectations, governmental guidelines, and the linguistic realities of their students. This institution serves around 4,000 students and has a teaching staff of 165 teachers. It is organized into a main campus and two additional primary branches, which together cover basic and secondary education.

The present study focuses on the main campus, where there are four English teachers and their perceptions which play a crucial role in shaping standardized English instruction.

Understanding teachers' perceptions about translanguaging is therefore essential, as they directly _____

influence classroom practices and determine how students' linguistic resources especially Spanish are used or restricted during English learning.

Bilingualism within educational setting has the potential to develop communicative, cognitive and cultural competencies, however, this potential can only be realized when teachers recognize the value of student's full linguistic repertoires (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). In this sense, this research explores how English teachers perceive translanguaging and how these perceptions affect their pedagogical decisions. Such explorations also contribute to understanding how institutional policies and teachers own linguistic and professional trajectories inform their acceptance, resistance, or reinterpretation of translanguaging.

Furthermore, teachers' perceptions are influenced by challenges they observe in the classroom, including students' fear of participation, low self-confidence, pronunciation anxiety, and the possibility of ridicule. By considering translanguaging, teachers may begin to identify how students' prior knowledge and their mother tongue can become meaningful resources rather than obstacles. This perspective can empower learners, foster confidence, and promote more active participation, potentially improving academic performance and the overall classroom environment.

This study is significant because it positions teachers not only as implementers of educational policies but also reflective agents who interpret and negotiate the concept of bilingualism within their specific socio-educational context. Ultimately, understanding teachers' perceptions will inform the design of a professional development proposals aimed at encouraging English teachers to experience, evaluate, and integrate translanguaging practice in their classroom.

Research question.

What are English teachers' perceptions about translanguaging in a public school in Colombia?

General Objective

- Analyze the English teachers' perceptions about translanguaging in a public school in Colombia

Specific objectives

- To examine the institutional and government policies that might influence teachers' perceptions about the implementation of translanguaging
- To identify English teachers' perceptions towards the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy.
- To analyze how teachers' professional and linguistic experiences influence their perceptions of translanguaging.

Literature review

The main perspectives on translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context are carefully divided and analyzed based on different authors' perspectives. The discussion to be developed includes international studies that explore teachers' perceptions and practices, which will be contrasted to analyze the potential challenges and opportunities in secondary education, particularly in the context of the public school Jorge Eliecer Gaitan.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is the process conducted by a speaker to use different resources and proper repertoire to more than one language to express ideas beyond the natural limitation of languages. In education it is a powerful resource to ensure the students fully absorb the required knowledge considering that “the basic idea of translanguaging is that one language reinforces the other to improve understanding and intensify learners' involvement in class activities in both languages” (Chicherina and Strelkova, 2023, p. 3).

In essence, translanguaging can be defined as the integrated practice of bilinguals to construct meaning, communicate, and learn in different languages (García, 2024). This approach assumes that bilinguals do not tend to keep apart their linguistic repertoires but take advantage of all their bilingual skills wisely and adapt to the context. From a pedagogical standpoint, translanguaging has been recognized as a tool to increase comprehension, student participation, and self-esteem, as it allows learners to connect prior knowledge in their mother tongue with new learning in the target language (Jiménez et al, 2017).

Translanguaging is efficient in building understanding because pre-existing knowledge is a foundation for further learning, and crosslinguistic transfer is possible since languages are interdependent (Baker and Wright, 2017). Similarly, Lewis et al. (2012) emphasize that translanguaging engages multiple cognitive processing skills. It involves listening, reading, assimilating, accommodating information, and selecting from stored knowledge to communicate in speaking and writing.

Interestingly, studies like the one conducted by Jonsson (2013) show how teachers, students, and institutions tend to have contradictory approaches regarding translanguaging. So, teachers were either positive on allowing translanguaging or very restrictive and explicitly discouraging translanguaging. This happens in an international school which highlights bilingualism as a core value of its identity, but at the same time implicitly enforces “double monolingualism” within its day-to-day practices. On the contrary, duality persists in students’ approach on translanguaging, as most perceive it as a valid and natural practice for an international school, while taking care not to surpass teachers’ limits or institutional guidelines, usually during interactions from student to student.

This is opposed to the scenarios where translanguaging is fully supported and implemented by instructed and experienced professionals on translanguaging, who structure how and when to apply this practice to ensure making the most of it. In this scenario, presented by Zheng et al (2024), infants face the challenge of studying in institutions where education is only conducted in L2, However, translanguaging practices are viewed positively and applied by teachers through a pedagogical approach in ludic scenarios or when emotional support is required, leading to students' engagement and connection to teachers, favoring students' performance and prompting meaningful teaching experiences.

That is why, the idea of translanguaging comes from teachers' flexibility on engaging learners' linguistic repertoires in classrooms and this concept is viewed by Sefotho (2022, 2025) "as a pedagogy that knows no boundaries between or among languages and which can be utilized in bilingual or multilingual classroom settings where learners come to the classroom with knowledge of more than one language" (p. 650). In this sense, translanguaging has come to dismantle an outdated perception regarding the role of L1 vs L2, where L1 is marginalized and put aside in the name of "bilingualism" which is no more than colonial monolingualism, opening the gate for reminding teachers that "the actual purpose of learning new languages is to become bilingual and multilingual, rather than to replace the learner's L1 to become another monolingual" (Almayez, 2022, p. 5).

Teachers' Perceptions of Translanguaging

Whenever a person is presented to a situation, that person is going to undergo a complex process of creation of perceptions, these ones are related to attitudes and how a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli, generating an interpretation based on earlier experiences (Pickens, 2005). Therefore, this process is not going to stop at that point and this is going to be complemented by a series of processes covering the "recognition, interpretation, and meaning for the formation of judgments based on sensations obtained from the physical and social environment" (Vargas, 1994, p. 48). Finally, as natural to any process, not all information is going to be fully absorbed and "individuals will naturally select the stimuli that satisfy their immediate needs and may disregard stimuli that may cause psychological anxiety leading to perceptions being different from reality". (Pickens, 2005, p. 54)

Considering what was already mentioned, teachers' perceptions of translanguaging can differ significantly depending on multiple factors, such as the educational background, teaching

experience, language proficiency, and situations related to the context and place where the teaching practice is being conducted. The following are some perceptions that were identified in the review of the literature.

Translanguaging as Discreet and Unrecognized Practice

Teachers' perceptions of translanguaging can have multiple layers and according to Sobkowiak (2022), some teachers recognize its potential benefits; however, many of them perceive a traditional view that favors monolingual instruction. Interestingly, translanguaging occurs unconsciously when teachers clarify concepts, explain difficult terms, or check for understanding. Nevertheless, this use remains discreet and is not openly acknowledged due to institutional pressures and traditional teaching models. This reveals a clear disconnect between teachers' perceptions and what occurs in classroom practices.

That is why, it is interesting how translanguaging is not directly acknowledged by teachers as a valid practice in L2 classes, but still this it continues to survive or, even, thrive in many academic contexts, and this is explained due to the use of translanguaging happening in the classroom as a “clandestine practice” where it is usually unplanned, accidental, and ignored, and due to teachers' perceptions purposeful spaces are not usually generated “for in-class translanguaging nor do they pay attention to their students' translanguaging” (Escobar, 2019, p. 290). This perception holds translanguaging from becoming accepted by teachers and limits its use to informal contexts.

Translanguaging as a Natural but Informal Practice

Similarly, it is argued that translanguaging emerges naturally as an approach in bilingual classrooms without previous planning. While teachers acknowledge its benefits, many do not use

it intentionally as a pedagogical approach due to a lack of training and partly because of institutional restrictions that prioritize monolingual approaches. Translanguaging is often limited to addressing practical needs such as giving instructions, managing discipline, or clarifying content (Yuvayapan, 2019). This confirms that while translanguaging is recognized in theory, it is often perceived as informal or poorly structured, reinforcing the dominance of monolingual approach.

Additionally, even if it is acknowledged that translanguaging is a natural practice among bilingual people, it is preferable to keep languages separate, especially in formal contexts like classroom environments. This is reinforced by “teachers’ perception on how their role is associated with the capability to keep the languages separately and focus on the foreign language teaching by reminding students that it is necessary to maintain the use of L2, even when students find more comfortable to use their mother tongue in language classes” (Cunha de Morais et al, 2022, p. 123).

Teachers’ Perception about Governmental Policies and Institutional Pressures

Chen et al. (2024) explore the case of secondary school in China, revealing that teachers’ reluctance to adopt translanguaging is not necessarily due to explicit policy restrictions, but rather to internalized perceptions about the superiority of monolingual instructions. Teachers face pressure to create a “native like” English environment, which reinforces the resistance to innovative approaches. The study suggests that teachers’ perceptions and lack of awareness act as barriers, making professional training a key factor in enabling more inclusive and flexible practices.

However, it is also evident that institutions' and other stakeholders' pressure to stick to monolingual approaches and pedagogies limits teachers' natural pedagogical translanguaging Almayez (2022). This is also highlighted in the study conducted by Escobar (2019) where teachers face “institutional negative stances toward translanguaging which creates pressures on them to abide to language separation ideologies pushing teachers to engage in language policing, as a way to maintain their reputation as good instructors” (p. 302). Considering what was previously mentioned, the teachers' role is to manage to maintain artificially created spaces where monolingualism reigns at the expense of students' limitation of communications resources.

Translanguaging Perceptions through Evidence and Experience

It is also identified that teachers who are not familiar with the concept of translanguaging or who do not hold a positive view of this concept tend to be more favorable towards the implementation of translanguaging pedagogical practices when faced to evidence of its positive impact in teacher-student relationship and student performance. In the Mozambican context, Chambo (2021) emphasizes that translanguaging is still undervalued due to persistent traditional perception that disregard the use of the first language in bilingual education. However, this perception can change when teachers are directly exposed to translanguaging approach practices and evidence of their effectiveness. By engaging in hands-on activities that integrate translanguaging, teachers not only observe its benefits but also begin to move beyond monolingual approaches. This suggests that professional development programs play a transformative role in shifting teacher perceptions. This is reinforced by the study conducted by Duarte (2018) in Netherlands and Luxembourg where translanguaging was accepted by teachers as it was offered as a scaffolding option which offered temporary bridges between the official

languages of education and the ones students use at home and acknowledging that all languages serve a purpose in language education.

In conclusion, when placing these studies in dialogue, a common pattern emerges: translanguaging is frequently present in classroom practices, but it is often applied unconsciously, informally, or discreetly (Sobkowiak, 2022; Yuvayapan, 2019). The main barriers identified are teachers' perceptions, lack of training, and institutional expectations of monolingual instructions (Chen et al., 2024). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that when teachers are intentionally trained and given opportunities to experiment with translanguaging, their perceptions evolve toward recognizing it as a valid and powerful pedagogical approach (Chambo, 2021).

Therefore, the literature demonstrates a tension between the approach of translanguaging as a transformative tool for bilingual education and the reality of its limited, hesitant, or hidden implementation in classrooms. This underlines the importance of examining teachers' perceptions in specific context, such as the Jorge Elicer Gaitan School, and designing professional development programs that help teachers consciously and strategically adopt translanguaging to enhance students' learning experiences.

Method

This research took a qualitative approach, aiming to dive deep into the perceptions that English teachers shared about using translanguaging as a teaching strategy. By doing so, the researcher was able to tap into the participants' experiences, meanings, and practices from a

nuanced and contextual viewpoint, really focusing on how they interpreted their classroom realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was set up as an instrumental case study at the Jorge Eliecer Gaitán Educational Institution in the Meta department of Colombia. As Stake (1995) points out, an instrumental case study is used when the researcher wants to gain a richer understanding of a larger issue by examining a specific case. Even though there are four English teachers in the institution, only two were selected since their professional profiles and teaching experiences are representative in the wider English department. This number was deemed appropriate to reach a theoretical saturation, defined by Strauss & Corbin (2008) as a stage where the data is already repetitive, and no new relevant information emerges.

Participants

For the selection of participants purposive sampling was employed, as the study aims to explore English teachers' perceptions of translanguageing. This approach allows for the intentional selection of participants who possess relevant characteristics aligned with the study objectives. In this context, English teachers working with students at different language proficiency levels and with experience in language practices were selected.

The participants of this study were four English teachers from a public school in the Meta Department, Colombia: Institución Educativa Jorge Eliecer Gaitán. The first teacher, called Teacher A, teaches English in grades eighth and ninth, making a total of eight groups. Her academic background involves a master's degree in education, and she has been teaching the English language for 12 years.

The second teacher, herein referred to as Teacher B, teaches the sixth and seventh grades. She holds a bachelor's degree in English, a master's in education in Educational Technology (ICT), and currently pursues a Doctorate in Education. She has been teaching English for the last 10 years.

The third teacher, referred to as Teacher C, teaches English in tenth and eleventh grades. He holds a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages and has completed a specialization in Pedagogy. He has been teaching English for 15 years and has experience preparing students for national standardized tests, such as the ICFES examination.

The fourth teacher, referred to as Teacher D, teaches English in primary education, specifically in fourth and fifth grades. She holds a bachelor's degree in Foreign Language Teaching and a master's degree in education. She has 8 years of teaching experience and has participated in institutional projects related to bilingual education and curriculum development.

Instruments

The selected instruments aimed to explore teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and classroom practices related to translanguaging, as well as the contextual and institutional factors that may shape these perceptions. This approach of translanguaging ensured that the data gathered would provide meaningful insights to analyze how teachers understand and experience translanguaging within their professional context.

Document Review

It is highlighted that document review helps in understanding the context of the investigation by contrasting preconceptions and concepts of investigators and enriching their

vocabulary in the subject (Gomez et al., 2017). That is why it is important to note that teachers' perceptions on translanguaging are influenced by institutional policies and guidelines.

Consequently, five institutional documents were analyzed to have a more holistic view on the education context experiences by teachers. These documents are Proyecto Educativo Institucional (PEI) which is the institutional guideline for Institución Educativa Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, Lineamientos Curriculares de Idiomas Extranjeros which is a governmental guideline from the for English teaching in Colombia, Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje (DBA) de Inglés which describe the right students have in education, Plan de Área de Inglés (I.E. Jorge Eliecer Gaitán) which is the curriculum created by teachers to be implemented in the classes and Política Pública Nacional en Multilingüismo (PPNM) which is the last initiative from the government to address language teaching from a more inclusive way.

Semi-structured interview

As indicated by Kvale (1996), the qualitative semi-structured interview offers the opportunity for the respondents to describe their experience elaborately, and the researcher guides the interaction toward matters related to the focus of the study. Such an interview enables the establishment of meanings and the formation of mutual understanding, and it is central for the interpretative analysis of an educational phenomenon such as translanguaging.

The instrument was designed as a semi-structured interview involving fifteen open-ended questions. The interview itself took an estimated 60 minutes and was individually administered. The aim of the instrument is to get insights into the knowledge, understanding, and practices of teachers of English on the topic of translanguaging.

Ethics

The study ensured that all participants were fully informed about the research before their inclusion. An informed consent (IC) form was provided to each participant, explaining the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. By signing the consent form, participants confirmed their willingness to take part in the research project. The informed consent form provided a clear description of the study objectives as well as providing descriptive information related to the methodology of data collection or research instruments, anticipated contributions to academia, and the level of risk associated with participation.

The informed consent also outlined how participant's data would remain confidential. Participants were informed they would be assigned a pseudonym, so that their identities would not be disclosed in any report or publication, and that no information that might be deemed sensitive would be disclosed in any report or publication. The informed consent described how the participant's data would remain secure by being stored in a secure location with limited access, and that the data would only be used for academic purposes.

[Annex 1](#)

Data Analysis

To carry out the data analysis, the first step involved the preparation of the data. This stage consisted of transcribing the interviews to transform the audio recordings into textual information suitable for versions of the transcriptions. These were subsequently reviewed manually to ensure the accuracy and fidelity of the content. And the summary and compilation of institutional documents within a document highlighting the main findings related to the investigation.

Regarding the data analysis process, the ATLAS.ti software was used as the main tool for organizing and systematizing the information. Once the interview transcriptions and the compilation documents of the institutional documents were uploaded into the program, the coding process began using an inductive approach, following the guidelines proposed by Creswell (2009), who suggests that codes emerge directly from the data and allow for the identification of recurring patterns and themes.

In the initial phase, a total of 222 codes were identified. Subsequently, a process of refinement and reduction was carried out, in which codes with conceptual similarities had emerged, and those not directly related to the focus of the research were eliminated. This process made it possible to simplify the information, organize ideas more clearly, and strengthen the coherence of the analysis.

As a result of this process, the central themes derived from the application of the research instruments were identified, along with a more precise classification of the final codes. This

facilitated the structure of the analysis and laid the foundation for interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions.

Finally, four main themes and nine subthemes were identified, which are presented in the following categorical map.

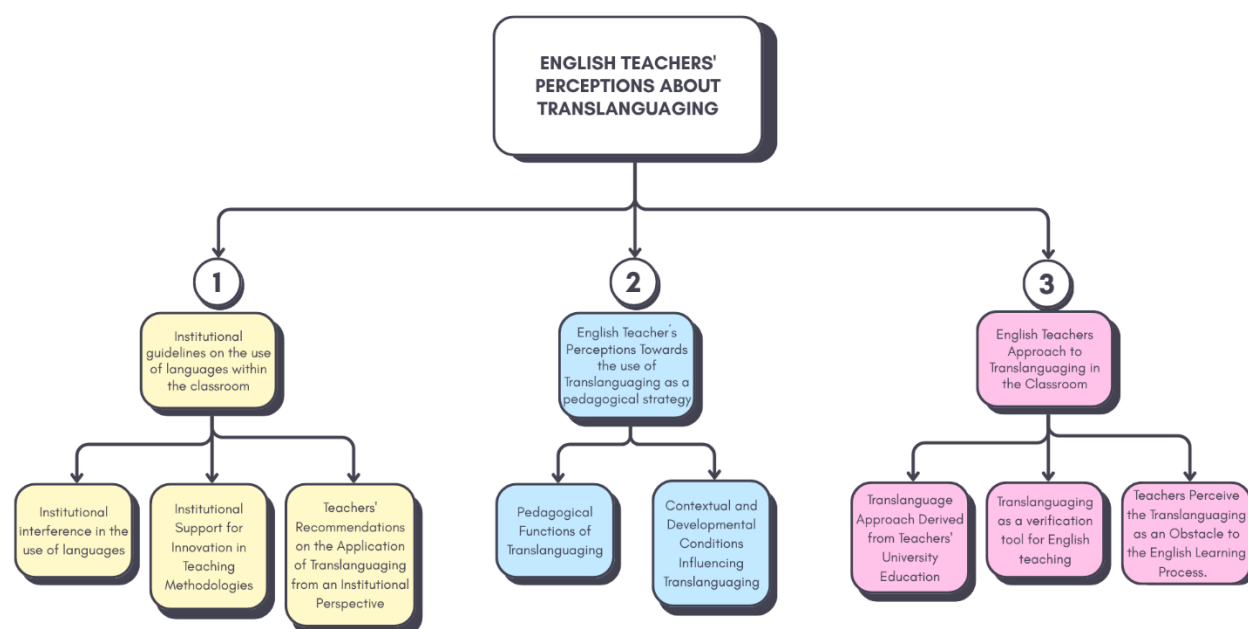


Figure 1 Coding Map. English Teachers' Perceptions about Translanguaging

Institutional Guidelines on the Use of Languages within the Classroom

This category examines teachers' perceptions of how institutions regulate language use in English classrooms. Different perceptions are presented, accompanied by the personal experiences of each of the four teachers interviewed.

Given the above, there is a divide in the perspectives of the teachers interviewed: some point to the control exercised by educational institutions over teachers' freedom to deviate from the monolingual bilingualism model and incorporate other languages into the educational

process, including the mother tongue, while others indicate that in their teaching practice they have autonomy in the use of languages and do not typically experience institutional or educational community pressure regarding the application of different methodologies in the classroom.

Consequently, the following subcategories have been established to reflect the perceptions of teachers at the Jorge Eliecer Gaitán institution regarding institutional practices throughout their careers:

Institutional interference in the use of languages

This subcategory examines teachers' perceptions of how educational institutions influence teaching processes as they relate to language instruction. In response to this, the interviewees agreed that each institution approaches the use of a specific language within the classroom depending on its context; however, public institutions typically exhibit a higher degree of flexibility, given that the de facto objective is performance on state exams. This is noted by Participant C, who states that “there is a degree of autonomy in the English department regarding such pedagogical practices. Because it is true that educational institutions are highly focused on achieving high performance on state exams.

This forces teachers to find ways to achieve the results the institution demands them on standardized tests, and Dalal and Gunderman (2011) argue that this pressure can reach a point where it becomes the sole objective of the educational process. This can lead to the entire learning process deviating from its true purpose, with teachers ultimately applying their own perceptions and techniques in the classroom and straying from clear learning objectives due to a lack of rigor and innovation. Furthermore, it is found that incorporating techniques such as

translanguaging into standardized assessment systems is often complex, as these systems typically have a monolingual focus and would require a reevaluation of the assessment model to include new learning objectives (Wang and East, 2024); consequently, teachers, given their autonomy, often do not find reasons to implement such innovations.

The pressure teachers face to ensure their courses achieve high scores—which determines both their performance and reputation within the institution—makes this a top priority for both the faculty and the educational institution, allowing public institutions to be flexible on methodologies as long as they achieve positive results on standardized tests such as the SABER exams. Statements such as “as long as there are results and no complaints, they don’t usually intervene much in that regard,” made by Participant A, and “what matters are the results; the methods don’t matter” made by Participant C, reveal teachers’ perceptions of how institutions and education are managed in the country.

This is important because one factor which would mold teachers' perception about translanguaging would be institutional and governmental policies and guidelines addressing the application of this concept in bilingual education. However, in the institutional document review, it was identified that translanguaging, or any other similar concept, is conspicuous by its absence in the education laws and regulations. Concepts like multilingualism are just beginning to take relevance in the education system thanks to the National Program of Multilingualism, meaning there is still a long way to go before translanguaging begins to be considered within the education system.

For this reason, efforts must be made through public policy to structure the model used to measure education because, while standardization is a valid form of education, other approaches should be offered to allow for different perspectives and indicators that measure factors not

currently taken into account in the current model. And this is even more important given the unfair nature of standardized testing, which leaves behind students with low scores when the overall average is high (Yepes, 2004).

Institutional Support for Innovation in Teaching Methodologies

This subcategory explores the support that educational institutions provide for innovation and the ongoing professional development of English teachers, with the aim of ensuring that they are trained in new methodologies and techniques that positively contribute to the learning processes they lead in their classrooms. To this end, it was noted that all teachers reported having heard about translanguaging during professional development sessions they attended throughout their careers and professional trajectory. As participant D states, “Yes, I have participated in various training and mentoring programs,” and participant C adds, “Recently, there was an initiative in which some teachers in Colombia—from the Pacific region, as well as the Meta and Orinoquía regions—received training and support through a certificate program.”

In light of this, it can be confirmed that teachers are familiar with the term, but obstacles to implementing innovative approach such as translanguaging may stem from a lack of interest in truly understanding how to apply it in the classroom. This is the case highlighted by Chen et al. (2024), who argue that teachers are not interested in implementing such practices, primarily due to perceptions and a lack of awareness, even when their institutions promote training programs. Therefore, it is important for institutions to be aware of this reality to ensure that their training programs are effective and not merely a formality carried out to meet government requirements.

Thus, the approach used in institutional professional development plays a significant role in transforming teachers’ perceptions, as it helps foster a sense of self-awareness regarding the

role teachers play in ensuring educational quality—rather than focusing exclusively on the teaching process itself—since educators are, first and foremost, people with perceptions, interests, and emotions—which, ultimately, define the manner and criteria they choose when performing their professional duties.

To this end, institutions can lead training initiatives in which teachers “should participate in training sessions that connect classroom realities to theoretical concepts that support the development of effective teaching practices” (Vial et al., 2023, p. 454). This could ensure that the entire teacher's training process provides real added value through practical guidance on how to act, since teachers often rely on perceptions—which are not always well-founded—and lack of support during the training process.

Teachers' Recommendations on the Application of Translanguaging on an Institutional Perspective

This subcategory aims to understand the needs expressed by teachers to successfully implement innovative approaches such as translanguaging and move beyond negative perspectives and practices where monolingual dynamics often prevail in bilingual classrooms. Here, statements from participants such as C are highlighted, who noted that it would be very beneficial to conduct professional development that includes practical applications, as Perrenoud & Thurler (2009) point out when emphasizing the importance of the inseparability of theory and practice in teacher training. This is necessary within a teaching context where teachers often resist innovation in education and new ways of teaching because they are accustomed to teaching the way they always have.

Given this situation, teacher training can play a role in changing teachers' perceptions of new approach such as translanguaging, moving away from outdated approaches that may be hindering educational processes but are deeply entrenched. This is highlighted by Participant A, who emphasizes the importance of pedagogical support through practical training, concrete examples, and opportunities to address questions. Similarly, Chambo (2021) notes that teachers respond positively when exposed to tangible results accompanied by pedagogical approaches that further raise their awareness of these issues. This is why it is important to educate educators and help them recognize the need to innovate in educational processes, reminding them that they are agents of social change and that their work directly impacts the people they are preparing for the future.

Participants also point out, as Participant C does, the importance of having spaces where teachers can exchange ideas and where they themselves can teach other teachers about what works and what doesn't work in the classroom. Snel (2022) highlights this by noting that teachers who wanted to incorporate translanguaging into their approaches faced difficulties in finding materials and emphasized the need for greater collaboration among teachers, proposing the use of platforms where teachers can exchange ideas and materials. This makes perfect sense because teachers who typically participate in training sessions often do so in a passive role, and training opportunities are rarely provided that allow teachers to understand the experiences from other teachers and public institutions have had with approach such as translanguaging—which could greatly facilitate the process of building collective knowledge and lead to the consolidation of a teacher support network.

That is why it is important to foster a sense of reflection among teachers so that, through training programs supported by institutions, they can engage in a more rigorous form of

evidence-based thinking, one in which they can systematically collect information about their teaching, in order to examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices and arrive at more effective problem-solving (Farrell, 2019). In the same way he highlighted that one of the problems identified is the creation of professional training programs that attempt to solve teaching problems but often neglect “the teacher’s self-awareness as a person in the act of teaching” (p. 9), a shortcoming that typically results in perceptions and beliefs going unchallenged during this process. To this end, various reflection resources can be used, ranging from self-reflection to group reflection and online reflection, where communities can be created and discussions, questioning, and even challenging of perceptions and practices can take place (Farrell, 2019). This fosters a constant construction of knowledge and the development of tools to address common challenges and contributes to dismantling perceptions that often undermine the educational process as a whole.

English teachers’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical experience

In this category, the perceptions of English teachers regarding the practice of translanguaging in their teaching processes are analyzed. The perspective of this practice of translanguaging in the teaching of English as a foreign language considers the flexible use of students’ linguistic repertoires as a possibility for them to understand, communicate, and develop their linguistic skills in the classroom. In this regard, García and Lin (2017) describe translanguaging in bilingual education as a pedagogical approach that allows students to use their complete linguistic repertoires to support communication, meaning making, and learning processes. This category seeks to analyze and understand how teachers perceive this practice in

relation to their professional experience, the characteristics of the context, and institutional requirements.

Based on the information obtained, it is observed that the use of the mother tongue in the English class is not used only as a direct translation from one specific language to another, but also as a pedagogical strategy that can contribute to the construction of students' language learning. However, it is observed that teachers' perceptions present tension between traditional teaching practices and students' needs according to the context, especially in public educational institutions where the opportunity for students to come into contact with the language outside of school is nonexistent. Therefore, the analysis of this category allows understanding how teachers face these tensions and how they understand the practice of translanguaging based on their professional experience in Puerto Gaitán. the following subcategories are proposed:

Pedagogical Functions of Translanguaging

This subcategory focuses on the pedagogical functions associated with teachers' perceptions of the practice of bilingualism in the context of English language teaching. It is evident that the flexible use of Spanish and English as a means of spontaneous communication is not limited only to communicative purposes. Instead, teachers recognize that its use is a pedagogical tool intended to support and improve the understanding of content, clarify language structure, and encourage students' active participation in class. This perception is consistent with Daniel et al. (2017), who argue that translanguaging pedagogies can support students' literacy engagement by allowing bilingual learners to use their full linguistic repertoires to construct meaning and participate more actively in the learning process.

This is particularly evident in contexts in which students do not have contact with English outside the classroom. In these scenarios, translanguaging becomes a way to establish connections between students' prior knowledge and the content worked in the L2. In this way, the strategic use of the mother tongue can contribute to language learning through processes of linguistic mediation that facilitate the understanding of the concepts worked on in class.

From the analysis of the interviews, three main pedagogical functions were identified that teachers perceive as fundamental for the use of translanguaging in teaching practices. One of the main findings was that teachers perceive resorting to Spanish as a strategy to facilitate the understanding of concepts that were not fully understood when explained in English. In this sense, translanguaging is perceived as a resource to establish connections between students' prior knowledge and the content worked in the L2.

One of the teachers stated that they resort to Spanish when they observe that students are not able to fully understand an explanation given in English: "When I am explaining grammatical topics, I notice that in English alone they do not grasp the idea. So, I pause and explain in Spanish so they can better situate themselves." (Participant A). Similarly, another teacher indicated that the use of Spanish can become a tool to clarify concepts that are not understood through other pedagogical resources: "I had to resort to Spanish because through pictures, examples, or videos the student was not able to understand the concept." (Participant D)

These testimonies suggest that teachers perceive translanguaging as a mechanism of conceptual mediation that facilitates the understanding of content when students face difficulties in the foreign language. In other words, these results confirm what García and Wei (2014) propose, who argue that the translanguaging process provides students with the opportunity to resort to all their linguistic knowledge to construct meaning, which contributes to a greater

understanding of content. This understanding can be enhanced when language alternation occurs in bilingual teaching-learning contexts.

Another important finding in the interviews is that teachers use Spanish to explain complex linguistic structures of English, especially when there are significant grammatical differences between both languages. One of the participants explained that certain structures of English require an additional explanation in Spanish for students to understand them adequately: “There are grammatical situations that require clarification in Spanish... because there are structures that do not have the same organization as in Spanish.”

(Participant C)

The testimony suggests that teachers perceive that translanguaging can be used to compare linguistic systems and understand structural differences between English and Spanish. From a theoretical perspective, some authors point out that the use of translanguaging favors metalinguistic processes in students. García and Li Wei (2014) argue that, through the flexible use of several languages, students can reflect on the relationship between linguistic systems and better understand how they function. In line with this, the findings of this study indicate that teachers’ perceptions support this view, as they recognize translanguaging as a strategy that promotes both the immediate understanding of certain content and the development of a higher level of linguistic awareness among students.

A third finding that emerges in the interviews is that teachers perceive the use of Spanish as a strategy that can generate greater confidence in students during the process of learning English. One of the teachers interviewed mentioned that they perceive that the occasional use of Spanish can help reduce the anxiety that some students experience when learning a foreign language: “Spanish is a useful tool to teach students the best way to understand and to give them

confidence... I use it as a tool so they can understand and have confidence to learn the other language.” (Participant B)

Based on the previous accounts, teachers perceived that the function of translanguaging in the learning process was supportive, especially for content comprehension. The use of the mother tongue by the teacher facilitated the explanation of concepts that were not understood in English, promoting student participation and the continuity of the class. Consequently, the data indicate that the use of Spanish fulfills the function of avoiding obstacles in comprehension during the class.

The literature on translanguaging highlights the role of the use of the first language in the classroom to overcome linguistic obstacles that hinder access to content. According to García and Li Wei (2014, p. 106), its use facilitates students’ understanding and promotes their participation in learning activities. In relation to these findings, the data obtained in this study show that teachers perceive the use of Spanish as a strategy that supports students’ comprehension and encourages their participation, particularly when they face difficulties in understanding content in English, which is consistent with the perspective proposed by these authors.

In general, the results of the analysis show that teachers view translanguaging as a approach that fulfills several purposes in the English classroom. Teachers do not perceive it only as momentary practice in the classroom. Rather, they consider that the use of Spanish can become a resource that facilitates the understanding of meanings and how a certain structure works in another language, which in turn strengthens students’ confidence in the learning process. These results suggest that translanguaging emerges as an approach pedagogical response

to the needs of the educational context, especially in classrooms where students present an initial level of English and have little or no exposure to the language outside the classroom.

Contextual and Developmental Conditions Influencing Translanguaging

This subcategory focuses on the conditions that teachers perceive make the use of translanguaging possible in the English classroom, as well as its contextual and didactic implications. Teachers' pedagogical decisions are not made in isolation. These are influenced by different conditions, such as the level of English proficiency of students in the educational institution, teachers' beliefs, the characteristics of the teaching-learning situation, and teachers' previous teaching experiences. These elements can be understood as part of teachers' cognition, which refers to the beliefs, knowledge, and experiences that shape teachers' instructional decisions and classroom practices (Borg, 2003).

When, in an educational institution, students have limited access to English outside the classroom, teachers may face difficulties related to content comprehension, participation in class, or the progressive development of communicative skills. Faced with these challenges in the teaching-learning process, translanguaging may appear as an useful approach to respond to students' real needs.

Based on the information provided by the interviews, different contextual factors were identified that teachers perceive influence the incorporation of translanguaging into teaching practices. Some of these factors were mentioned by more than one teacher. The most frequently cited factor was the level of English proficiency. Participants commented that when their students were at an initial level of English, Spanish functioned as support when explaining content and helped maintain their participation in classroom activities. One of the teachers

explained that the use of Spanish becomes necessary when students still do not have enough linguistic tools to fully understand English: “At the most basic levels it is more necessary to use Spanish because students still do not have enough vocabulary to understand everything in English.” (Participant C). Similarly, another participant pointed out that the exclusive use of English can create difficulties when students are beginning their process of learning the language: “If one speaks only in English from the beginning, many students get lost in the explanation and stop participating.” (Participant A)

The previous testimonies suggest that teachers understand translanguaging as a resource to adjust explanations to students’ level, especially those with a low level of English proficiency. According to Cummins (2007), second language learning can improve when the mother tongue is used as a tool for constructing new meanings. Based on this, it can be interpreted that, in the cases mentioned by the participants, the use of Spanish not only responds to the need for comprehension but is also related to learning processes that contribute to the progressive construction of knowledge in the foreign language. In this sense, this finding shows how, in educational contexts where students have limited command of English, translanguaging is configured as a pedagogical response adjusted to the real needs of the classroom, allowing teachers to adapt their practices to the linguistic and educational conditions of their students.

Another factor that influences the use of translanguaging is related to the real conditions of the classroom and the educational context. Some teachers pointed out that classroom dynamics, the number of students, and time limitations may influence pedagogical decisions regarding language use. One of the teachers explained that, in some cases, the use of Spanish allows progress in explaining content when class time is limited: “Sometimes class time is short

and if I try to explain everything only in English, students take much longer to understand.”

(Participant B) Similarly, another teacher mentioned that group characteristics can influence the decision to use Spanish at certain moments: “It depends a lot on the group of students; there are groups that understand more quickly in English and others where it is necessary to support the explanation with Spanish.”

(Participant D)

These testimonies show that decisions about the use of translanguaging do not depend only on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, but also on the specific conditions of the educational context in which the teaching process takes place.

A third factor that emerges in the interviews is the influence of teachers’ professional experience on how they use translanguaging in the classroom.

Participants indicated that the use of Spanish in the English class is usually a pedagogical decision that develops from teaching experience and observation of students’ needs.

One of the teachers pointed out that over time they have learned to identify when it is necessary to use Spanish to support learning: “With experience, one learns at what moments to use Spanish and at what moments to maintain the explanation in English.”

(Participant B) Similarly, another participant indicated that the use of translanguaging responds to a process of adaptation to students’ real needs: “One begins to understand that each group is different and that sometimes it is necessary to adjust the way we explain the language.”

(Participant C)

These testimonies suggest that the use of translanguaging is linked to teachers’ professional experience, since in their practice they have developed criteria to identify when it is

necessary to use Spanish to support students' learning process. Teaching experience influences the construction of beliefs about the use of L1, as teachers adjust their pedagogical decisions based on their students' needs and the educational context. In this sense, translanguaging can be conceived as a situated practice based on teachers' professional judgment. In this line, García and Wei (2014) mention that translanguaging arises from real learning needs in particular contexts, which allows understanding that its use also responds to reflection processes constructed from teaching experience.

As mentioned above, the results of the interviews show that the use of translanguaging in the English classroom is influenced by different contextual conditions, especially students' level of linguistic competence, group characteristics, and teaching experience. Consequently, the findings indicate that translanguaging cannot be understood as a pedagogical approach per se. Rather, it is a practice that develops learning needs, the educational context, and teachers' professional judgment. Thus, the pedagogical practice of translanguaging, as reflected in the interviews, appears to be the result of an educational adaptation that allows addressing classroom circumstances and strengthening the process of language learning in the English class

English Teachers Approach to Translanguaging in the Classroom

This category refers to the way in which English teachers understand, interpret, and enact language practices associated with translanguaging in the classroom. It encompasses teachers' implicit perception, pedagogical decisions, and classroom actions related to the use of more than one language during English instruction. Importantly, this category recognizes that teachers may

engage in translanguaging practices without having explicit knowledge of the concept, applying them intuitively rather than as a consciously structured strategy.

The analysis reveals that, although teachers engage in practices aligned with translanguaging, they do not demonstrate explicit theoretical knowledge of the concept. Instead, these practices are applied without knowing shaped by immediate classroom needs, prior teaching experiences, and contextual realities. Furthermore, teachers' approaches are not homogeneous, rather, they fluctuate depending on their perceptions, experiences, and classroom dynamics.

Translanguaging Approach Derived from Teacher's University Education.

This subcategory refers to the implicit influence of teacher's academic formation on their openness to flexible language use in the classroom. Although participants do not explicitly recognize translanguaging as part of their professional training, certain pedagogical notions acquired during their university education appear to inform their practice.

The findings showing that some participants demonstrate a natural disposition toward using both English and Spanish as a part of their teaching, even if they do not label this practice as an approach. This indicates that elements of multilingual pedagogy may have been indirectly introduced during their academic preparations.

As one participant explained, "it does not mean that the class is taught in Spanish, but that certain moments it can serve to clarify something that students have not fully understood" (participant A). This statement reflects a pedagogical decision in which the teacher used the Spanish as a supportive resource rather than as a structure institutional approach.

From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with the idea proposed by Garcia and Li Wei (2014), who argue that translanguaging involves the use of the speaker's full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning. However, in this case, such practice occurs without explicit awareness or intentional planning.

From an analytical standpoint, it can be argued that while teacher's academic backgrounds may foster openers toward bilingual practices, the absence of explicit conceptual understanding limits their ability to implement translanguaging systematically, consequently, its pedagogical potential remains underutilized, as it is not integrated as a deliberate component of instructional design.

Translanguaging as a verification tool for English teaching.

This subcategory describes the use of translanguaging as a spontaneous approach to check comprehension and ensure that students understand the content presented in English, in this sense, Spanish is used as a mediating toll when communication breakdowns occur.

The findings indicate that the participants frequently resort to Spanish when they perceive that their students are struggling to follow explanations given exclusively in English. This practice is not pre-planned but emerges as an immediate response to student's needs.

For example, one participant stated, "if everything is done only in English, some students fall behind because they cannot understand what is being explained" (participant D). This highlights a concern for inclusivity, as teachers recognizes that strict English-only instruction may exclude some students.

This perception is consistent with Canagarajah (2011) who argues that multilingual speakers naturally draw on all their linguistic resources to negotiate meaning effectively. The

participant's viewpoint reflects this dynamic, in this context, the use of Spanish becomes a practical mechanism to maintain the communication and support understanding of the lesson.

Teachers perceive the translanguaging as an obstacle to the English learning process.

This category reflects the perspective help by some teachers that the use of the first language may hinder students' English learning. This perception is rooted in traditional monolingual ideologies that prioritize maximum exposure to the target language.

The findings reveal tension between teachers' practices and their perception. Although they occasionally use Spanish to support comprehension, they often express concern that its overuse may generate dependency or reduce opportunities for students to practice English.

This contradiction illustrates that simultaneously relies on translanguaging while questioning its pedagogical legitimacy. Their decision to limit the use of Spanish are not based on a structured framework but rather on assumptions about language teaching.

In this regard, Yuvayapan (2019) suggests that translanguaging is frequently applied in limited and unsystematic ways due to the persistence of monolingual approach in language education. This aligns with the findings of the present study, where the participants' reluctance to full embrace translanguaging stems from deeply rooted perception rather than informed pedagogical reasoning.

From an analytical perspective, this reveals a critical gap between practice and perception. While participants intuitively recognize the value of using multiple languages, their adherence to monolingual norms prevents them fully integrating translanguaging as a legitimate and effective teaching approach.

Conclusion

The findings related to teachers' perceptions of translanguaging in Colombia's public education sector suggest that teachers' perceptions of translanguaging are strongly influenced both by its practical value and by the traditional ideologies that tend to take root in them during their years of training and through institutional ideals. Thus, teachers often grapple with the duality of applying translanguaging—understanding that it facilitates communication processes within the classroom and fosters greater student engagement—while also maintaining the order and discipline required for language learning by ensuring that English prevails, so that students have maximum exposure to English to counteract the fact that such exposure is virtually nonexistent in their everyday environment.

Considering this, the first finding relates to the lack of inclusion of translanguaging and similar concepts regarding the use of students' repertoires and linguistic resources within institutional and governmental policies on bilingual and multilingual education. And in that line, public institutions tend to not exert a direct influence on teachers' decisions on how they address translanguaging in the classroom and it can be argued that there is a approach flexibility that grants teachers autonomy in their teaching practices with respect to the use of languages other than English. Consequently, teachers tend to follow subjective criteria influenced by the utility they typically find in this approach and consistency with their perceptions of how an English class should be conducted. Thus, it is considered important to begin working on professional development processes that help change perceptions, enabling teachers to overcome the constraints associated with methodological innovation.

The use of translanguaging as an approach pedagogical experience reveals that they do not see it as an arbitrary or spontaneous form of instruction, but instead as an intentional

instructional approach that has developed from the genuine needs of the classroom environment. Furthermore, teachers do not see the use of Spanish as simply a tool for translating an item from English into Spanish; instead, they see Spanish as a resource for enhancing understanding, clarifying the presentation of complicated structures in the language being taught and for motivating students to be active participants and build their confidence in the learning process.

An example of a finding that indicates how translanguaging has many important pedagogical purposes is that teachers consistently reported they use Spanish to help students understand a concept if students could not understand the concept in English, specifically with regard to the teachers' explanations of grammar or abstract concepts. Thus, translanguaging enables students to link their previous knowledge of the subject to the new content that is presented in the target language because it serves as a tool for both conceptually and linguistically creating a bridge between the students' prior knowledge and the new content. Teachers reported that translanguaging also helps develop metalinguistic awareness, which allows students to examine both languages they are learning (their first language and the target language) and to develop a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between each language as well as the patterns of each language.

An additional significant discovery concerns how much emotion plays a role in learning languages. Teachers believe that when students strategically utilize their native language while learning English, students are able to have less anxiety and greater confidence in using English. This may indicate not only does translanguaging support students' cognitive processes, but that it is also integral to providing a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, especially in settings where students are exposed to little English outside the classroom.

Additionally, there is a disconnect between traditional monolingual instructional behaviors and students' needs in public schools. Even though the institution may expect a teacher to instruct exclusively in English when teaching English, the majority of teachers express doubt about their success when teaching based on the needs of the student. Therefore, translanguaging becomes an effective and situationally-responsive strategy that allows teachers to create connections between those two distinctions so that there is continuity and understanding throughout the learning experience.

Despite the evaluable insights generated, this study presents several approaches limitations that should be acknowledged, first, the search was conducted under a qualitative instrumental case study design, focusing on a single public institution in Colombia. While this approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of teacher's perceptions Within a specific context, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or regions with different sociolinguistic and institutional conditions.

Secondly, the sample size was relatively small, as only four English teachers participated in study. Although purposive sampling ensured that participants had relevant experience and provided rich data, the limited number of participants may not fully represent the diversity of perceptions present in other public schools or even Within the same institution.

Another limitation lies in the data collection methods, which relied primarily on semi-structured interviews and document analysis. While these instruments provided valuable insights into teacher's perceptions and institutional influences, the absence of classroom observations restricted the possibility of directly contrasting participants reported their perception with their actual pedagogical practical. As a result, the findings are based mainly on the self. -reported data, which may be influenced by partisans' subjectivity or social status.

Additionally, although the study included document review to contextualize institutional policies, it did not incorporate perspectives from other key stakeholders such students, school admittaturs, or policymakers. Including these voices could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how translanguaging os perceived and enacted across different levels of the educational system.

The context-specific nature of the study, particularly in a public school where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom., may have influenced teacher's perceptions and practices. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted considering these contextual constraints, as different results might emerge in private institutions or bilingual schools with greater exposure to the target languages.

The findings of this study led to one of the main objectives for future research, which is the development of training opportunities for teachers focusing on the approach of pedagogical use of translanguaging. The results reveal that many teachers utilize Spanish as support in their classrooms; however, this strategy is often utilized intuitively rather than deliberately planned. Thus, developing training opportunities would help convert this practice into a more intentional, planned, and pedagogically supported pedagogical practice.

The training opportunities could be offered in the form of short workshops geared toward English teachers working in similar public-school contexts. The goal would be to equip teachers with a practical approach to effectively implement translanguaging in their classrooms, taking into consideration their students' proficiency levels, learning needs, and contextual conditions. These venues would provide the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences as teachers in order to recognize how their pedagogical decision-making is influenced by their context and their professional trajectory. In this way, this project is not only about documenting

teachers' perceptions, but rather it proposes a concrete action as it pertains to strengthening pedagogical best practices through training experiences that validate translanguaging as a legitimate approach pedagogical and respond to the diverse cultural contexts of the students. This will make English language instruction more effective, equitable, and aligned with the linguistic realities of students in public educational contexts.

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