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The use of TransLanguage to improve oral reading proficiency in a foreign language classroom

El uso de Translenguaje para mejorar la competencia de lectura oral en un aula de lengua extranjera

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Resumen

El translenguaje es un enfoque que no ve fronteras entre las lenguas y permite su uso simultáneo cuando se enseña y se aprende una nueva lengua, por lo tanto, puede ser utilizado como un dispositivo de andamiaje para desarrollar una lengua extranjera, ya que ayuda a los estudiantes a aclarar los términos y a hacer el significado. Sin embargo, es un término relativamente reciente en América Latina y las investigaciones relacionadas con él son escasas. El objetivo principal que guió este estudio fue aplicar el translenguaje durante las clases de inglés en una escuela secundaria privada para mejorar la competencia lectora oral de los estudiantes. Se realizaron pruebas previas y posteriores al principio y al final de una unidad (que duró 6 semanas) en las que los estudiantes leyeron un pasaje de 300 palabras y se contaron las palabras leídas correctamente en un minuto. Además, se aplicó una encuesta en escala Likert a los alumnos y a un profesor para conocer sus experiencias y percepciones tras la aplicación del translenguaje. Se llevó a cabo una prueba t y los resultados mostraron una mejora en la competencia lectora oral de los estudiantes (media = 221,55 en la preprueba y media = 243,22 en la posprueba con una desviación estándar de 42,20 y 30,20 respectivamente) tras el uso de este enfoque con una diferencia estadísticamente significativa ($p > 0,001$). La media de palabras leídas correctamente aumentó en el post-test ($M = 21,68$; $SD = 18,88$). El uso del translenguaje probablemente



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tuvo un resultado positivo en la habilidad estudiada y también en las experiencias de los alumnos y del profesor al utilizar el translenguaje.

Palabras clave

Competencia en lectura oral, lengua extranjera, translenguaje

Abstract

Translanguaging is an approach that sees no boundaries between languages and allows their simultaneous use when teaching and learning a new language, therefore, it can be used as a scaffold device to develop a foreign language since it helps students clarify terms and make meaning. Nevertheless, it is a relatively recent term in Latin America, and investigations related to it are scarce. The main objective that guided this study was to apply translanguaging during English classes in a private High School to improve the students' oral reading proficiency. A pre and post-tests were taken at the beginning and the end of one unit (which lasted 6 weeks) where students read a 300-word passage and words read correctly within a minute were counted. Also, a Likert-scale survey was applied to students and a teacher to know their experiences and perceptions after the application of translanguaging. A t-test was carried out and the results showed an improvement in the students' oral reading proficiency (Mean = 221.55 in the pre-test and Mean = 243.22 in the post-test with a standard deviation of 42.20 and 30.20 respectively) after the usage of this approach with a difference statistically significant ($p > 0.001$). The mean of words read correctly increased in the post-test ($M = 21.68$; $SD = 18.88$). The use of translanguaging probably had a positive result on the skill studied and also in the students and teacher's experiences when using translanguaging.

Key words

Foreign classroom, oral reading proficiency, translanguaging.

1. Introduction

The use of the mother tongue tends to be discouraged in foreign language classrooms (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017, p. 186); however, according to Wei (2017) this practice is "like tying one of their hands behind their back or blindfolding one of their eyes and still expecting them to do and see things as others do and see with both hands free and both eyes open" (p. 2). Furthermore, when learners have a low level of proficiency in the language of learning, they are unable to make meanings through the language of instruction, and translanguaging serves as a relevant scaffolding device that assists learners as they add the required features or meanings to the developing language (Garcia & Wei, 2018, p. 4).

In the context of Ecuador, when "students graduate, they must have a B1 proficiency level. However, this is not always achieved" (Machado, 2019, p. 1). Teachers apply many approaches and methodologies and may have particularly strong views on the best or worst, and use them according to the contexts of their students. In addition, some of the learners have limited access to the language of learning in their everyday environment (Wei, 2017, p. 1), and translanguaging practices tend to provide "a learning space in which language skills are considered primarily communicative competencies and in which monolingual language methods are considered guidelines rather than the only acceptable norm" (Nagy, 2018, p. 50).

Translingualism allows the use of the L1 to make meaning in the L2. According to Pacheco and Miller (2016, p. 533), students achieve better academic outcomes when using



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translanguage. This approach implies a continuous flow between languages and fluently integrates the different skills to convey and make meaning (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017, p. 187; Lasagabaster & García, 2014, p. 559). It considers languages as a whole and not as something separate. That is why it is applied in multiple situations, both inside and outside learning contexts, pedagogically and also spontaneously. Translanguaging is a “flexible view that fosters the synergies of the languages in contact, rather than penalizes their simultaneous use” (Lasagabaster & García, 2014, p. 559). It means translanguaging does not consider different languages as competing because when it is implemented correctly, does not harm the language skills in the learning language (Nagy, 2018, p. 50).

There are different methods and approaches to teaching a foreign language. Some of them state the exclusive use of the target language. However, translanguaging represents a change from traditional monolingual methods which can be limiting and inhibit creative expressions (Makalela, 2015a, p. 203). This relatively new approach allows students to use all their linguistic skills, experience, and competences in L1 for meaning-making purposes (Nagy, 2018, p. 42). Despite these benefits, translanguage pedagogical practices are still the subject of research in foreign language instructional settings, whether face-to-face or online (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017, p. 185), and have not yet been investigated in depth in Latin America (Nielsen, 2018, p. 54). More studies are needed to analyze the effects of translanguaging in different contexts. For the reasons mentioned above, it is fundamental and pertinent to carry out a study about translanguaging in an English foreign language classroom, since it will not only be focused on the formal aspect of students’ learning but it will also take into account their experiences and perceptions. This research will also support the existent evidence about translanguaging in order to develop further investigations and place translanguaging as an important strategy that can be used at schools.

The research will be carried out in a private school in Quito - Calderón, where the students have a low level of English, therefore, it is complicated to manage a monolingual approach since most of the students do not understand most of the target language. The question that guided this research was to understand the usefulness of the use of translanguage and therefore, the main objective is to apply this approach during English classes in a private high school to improve students' oral reading proficiency. The article is divided into six sections, in the literature review a theoretical framework supporting the application of translanguage in a foreign language context is presented; the methodology and procedures that were followed and used are described in "Methods and Materials". The main results are presented in the following section, followed by an analysis and interpretation found in the Discussion section. The conclusions answer the main question of this study and a large number of references are presented in the last section.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Bilingualism

Bilingualism has many definitions (Yilmaz, 2019, p. 2), one of which is the mastery of two distinct and separate languages (Flores & Garcia, 2013, p. 243). On the other hand, there is a holistic view towards bilingualism that states "the fluent use of linguistic resources" (Yilmaz, 2019, p. 4). A rigid separation of languages does not fit this concept. Furthermore, emergent bilinguals are defined as people who are developing a new language (English, for example) and who "are at the beginning points of the bilingualism continuum" (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 5).



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2.2 Difference between code-switching and translanguaging

Sometimes these terms are confused. The latter expresses an alternation between two language systems and separate linguistic codes, which means, two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 1); and translanguaging goes beyond language boundaries (Nagy, 2018, p. 43). This approach sees languages as a whole and not as separate entities. It is a heteroglossic viewpoint that indicates the existence of one linguistic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014, p. 120).

2.3 Definition and types of translanguaging

Translanguaging is a term that was first used in 1994 by Cen Williams in Wales in a context where Welsh and English were used for teaching and learning (Williams, 1996 cited by Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012, p. 641). Over the years, various concepts and categories about translanguaging have been developed. Nagy (2018, p. 43) cites Garcia and Lin (2016, p. 124) and they suggest two versions of translanguaging: the "strong" and the "weak". On the one hand, the strong version states that there is a linguistic system and grammar, and language speakers choose the feature they need to interact. On the other hand, the weak version of translanguaging maintains traditional linguistic boundaries but promotes the softening of these boundaries, and allows fluidity between them.

On the pedagogical side, translanguaging keeps the two senses of language visible: the external (named language that is the medium of instruction), and the internal (the learners' linguistic repertoire) (García & Wei, 2018, p. 4). It maximizes all linguistic, cognitive, semiotic, and sociocultural resources in the construction of teachers' and learners' knowledge (Wei, 2017, p. 3). According to Licona and Gregory (2019, p. 486), the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy facilitates teacher framing and student participation. Generally speaking, this approach "gives teachers and students opportunities to build on their strengths and to recognize and use a range of language practices to enhance teaching and learning" (Esquinca, Araujo, & de la Pierda, 2014, p. 168). Translanguaging helps to clarify the meaning of terms, connect students' prior knowledge to the topic at hand, and engage students in various practices (Esquinca et al., 2014, p. 173), and provides participants with affective and social advantages as well as a deep understanding of the content (Makalela, 2015a, p. 200).

In regard to the language proficiency of the speakers, one-way and two-way translanguaging distinctions can be made as well as between dependent and independent translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014, p. 48). Emergent bilinguals who lack proficiency in a second language often show a one-way translanguaging and also a dependent form. In this case, learners use their dominant language as a scaffolding device (Nagy, 2018, p. 45). According to García and Wei (2014) "there are two types of translanguaging strategies: the first one is a 'teacher-directed translanguaging' to give voice, clarity, reinforce, manage the classroom and ask questions and the second is a 'student-directed translanguaging' to participate, to elaborate ideas, to raise questions" (p. 141). Furthermore, Lewis et al. (2012) also classify translanguaging into three categories:

- (a) Classroom Translanguaging (planned and serendipitous) with a pedagogic emphasis;
- (b) Universal Translanguaging with cognitive, contextual, and cultural aspects. While Universal Translanguaging includes the classroom as one context among many, retaining "classroom translanguaging" enables a discussion about learning and teaching style and curriculum planning.
- (c) Neurolinguistic Translanguaging is a new field that researches brain activity modulations when both languages are activated and holds much for the future. (p. 650)



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Finally, there is a spontaneous translanguaging and the pedagogical one. The former refers to the reality of bilingual usage in natural contexts where boundaries between languages are fluid and constantly shifting, and the latter is a pedagogic theory and practice that refer to instructional strategies that integrate two or more languages (García, 2009 quoted by Cenoz & Gorter, 2017, p. 4). Pedagogical translanguaging serves as a linking element that closes the gap between participants with different linguistic backgrounds, and also as a scaffolding device that helps emergent bilinguals to improve their linguistic skills and abilities (Nagy, 2018, p. 47). It implies a transformation in comparison to traditional ideologies of language separation (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p. 11).

2.4 Translanguaging in multilingual or bilingual contexts

In this field, many investigations have been carried out. Most of them have been done in bilingual or multilingual contexts. For instance, Dahlberg (2017, p. 5) developed research in an ESL class on basic adult education. The students were free to use all of their language capacity in order to learn the target language and translanguaging was a strategy to develop supportive learning structures.

Makalela (2015a, p. 204) carried out an experimental study for one year and worked on receptive and productive skills. It showed that translanguaging strategies are effective in increasing the vocabulary pool of multilingual speakers, getting a positive schooling experience, and affirming students' identities. Furthermore, a study by Nagy (2018, p. 48) presents the outcomes in reading comprehension using translanguaging activities between English and Hungarian (L1). Translanguaging leads to a more relaxed atmosphere, where the learning process is a creative one, based on the language skills of each individual who creates and negotiates meaning.

Hungwe (2019, p. 3) conducted a study at a university in South Africa, where most students are multilingual and English is not yet adequately developed. The use of two languages shows that they can be used interchangeably and fluently by students for a thorough understanding of texts, and a monolingual classroom may not solve the problem of poor comprehension.

2.5 Translanguaging in languages in foreign contexts

In terms of foreign language translanguage studies, Adinolfi and Astruc (2017, p. 190) conducted an initial exploration of translanguage pedagogical practices within a synchronous online foreign language classroom. They observed an adult beginner Spanish course at a distance learning university in the United Kingdom. They found that translanguage practices are present and concluded by suggesting increased translanguage opportunities. Wang (2016, p. 142) analyzed classroom participants' attitudes toward language choice through a questionnaire and observation. The study found that students' and teachers' attitudes toward translanguage and their practices have demonstrated scaffolding techniques that could improve communication and teacher-student relationships.

Translanguage in foreign language classrooms has contributed to giving students a voice in negotiating meanings at different levels. Nielsen (2018) observed Spanish classes for 7 months and concludes that "translanguaging is a phenomenon that greatly influences foreign language development" (p. 53). Furthermore, Ortega (2019) used a classroom experience in Colombia and states that students felt more empowered and motivated to learn more English after using translanguaging. They used it as a tool to create social tasks. This approach has shown that it is possible to "remove barriers to learning by creating an



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enabling and inclusive environment that validates first language identities and allows students to use Spanish to create meaning" (p. 164).

In general, plurilingual pedagogies and translanguaging approaches in EFL classrooms in Latin America have been minimally explored in the academic literature (Ortega, 2019, p. 160). Also, Wang (2016) establishes that adapting translanguaging in "foreign language education requires the reconstitution of teachers' knowledge of language and language teaching" (p. 148). Finally, online context studies have been scarcely investigated so far (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017, p. 188).

3. Methods and Materials

This study was quasi-experimental, correlational and longitudinal in which students were taught using translanguage strategies during the second unit of the 2020 - 2021 course. It had a duration of 6 weeks and two synchronous sessions of 40 minutes and two asynchronous sessions per week were conducted, except in third year of high school where one synchronous session per week and no asynchronous sessions were conducted. The data were primary and a mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative) was used.

The participants belonged to a private school located in Calderón, a rural parish of Quito, Ecuador. Five teachers taught various subjects and one teacher was in charge of English for all grades (eighth through third high school). There were 27 students in total (each grade had 1 to 10 students), consequently, it was not possible to have a control group during the study. The sample (N = 22) did not match the population due to the constant non-attendance of students while the study was being conducted. The students were first speakers of Spanish and had a low level of English. Nine girls and 13 boys participated in this research with an average age of 14.95 years. For the application of the aforementioned approach and the use of the data obtained, the authorization of the high school principal and the informed consent of the students' parents and those over 18 years of age were requested.

Regarding translanguage, the following strategies were used: the use of cognates and false cognates (there was a class exclusively to review this topic), comparisons and contrasts of grammatical structures between the students' mother tongue and the foreign language they are learning, there were weekly vocabulary entries in both languages, translation of terms and explanation of theory, important activities, instructions or tasks using the L1. The strategies have been used in other studies and suggested by people who have used translanguaging in pedagogical settings (Celic & Seltzer, 2016, p. 16; Esquinca et al., 2014, p. 176; Dahlberg, 2017, p. 8; Palmer et al, 2014, p. 760; Pacheco & Miller, 2016, p. 536; Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 106; Cenoz & Groter, 2017, p. 4; Nikula & Moore, 2016, p. 239; Cummins, 2007, p. 231; Nagy, 2018, p. 49; Valdiviezo, 2019, p. 52).

The chosen skill was oral reading proficiency due to the accuracy in its measurement (quantitative data) during the online classes. To determine the oral reading proficiency, pre and post-tests were taken by students at the beginning and the end of the second unit (October - December 2020). They read a 300-word passage (these were unpracticed for students). Those passages were designed by the researcher and validated by a peer before students read them. The oral proficiency level was analyzed according to a study carried out by Makalela (2015a, p. 207) who adopted the guidelines from Shinn (1989), to determine which words were counted as correct:

- Words read correctly. These include self-corrections within 3 seconds.
- Words read incorrectly. These include the following types of errors: mispronunciation, substitutions, and omissions.



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- If a student was struggling to pronounce a word or hesitated for three seconds, the student was told the word and it was counted as an error (p. 207).

At the end of each test, errors were subtracted from the total number of words students read within a minute to get the number of words correctly read. Furthermore, with the aim to take into account the students' and teacher's experiences and perceptions on the used approach, a survey with 10 questions was applied at the end of the second unit.

The survey was designed by the researcher in Google Forms. It was anonymous and questions were close-ended so as to reflect on their experiences. It was also validated before students took it by two peers (one expert in Linguistics and a B2 proficient expert) to determine the correctness of the vocabulary used. Classes and pre and post-tests were recorded by using Zoom application and videos served to analyze the oral reading proficiency in students.

The scores of the oral reading achievement were analyzed using descriptive statistical approaches to gauge measures of central tendencies and dispersion. A paired t-test was calculated on the pre and post-test means to assess statistical significance levels that were pitched at 0.05 (Makalela, 2015a, p. 207; Makalela, 2015b, p. 20) by using the SPSS program. Answers from the surveys were analyzed with a descriptive and qualitative approach by using Excel. An inter-rate reliability coefficient was calculated and the scores obtained by two observers regarding the oral reading proficiency were compared with a Pearson correlation test.

4. Results

After analyzing the data, the information was compared and some tests were used to get the results. The first scores presented are related to the reliability of the study, specifically to the data concerning the students' oral reading proficiency. Table 1 shows a Pearson Correlation test which values go from 0 to 1. It presents the number of students (22) who participated in the research. The total number of correct words per student analyzed by the two observers in the pre and post-tests was compared in order to get the reliability.

		Obs1Pre	Obs2Pre	Obs1Pos	Obs2Pos
Obs1Pre/ Pos	Pearson Correlation	1	.990**	1	.989**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		.000
	N	22	22	22	22
Obs2Pre/ Pos	Pearson Correlation	.990**	1	.989**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	
	N	22	22	22	22

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1. Correlation Pre-test and Post-test

The analyzed data have a normal distribution ($p > 0.05$). It can be observed that data from both observers in the pre-test and post-test have a high correlation ($r = 0.99$; $p < 0.001$ and



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$r = 0.989$; $p < 0.001$ respectively). It means the data obtained seems to be considerably reliable. Regarding the oral reading proficiency, in table 2, the following data can be found: the mean of the increased words between the pre and post-test, the standard deviation, and the significance of this difference.

		Mean	Paired Differences				t	d	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pa	Total	-	18.881	4.025	-	-	-	2	.000
ir	Pre	21.681	55	56	30.053	13.310	5.3	1	
1	Total	82			43	21	86		
	Pos								

Table 2. Paired Samples Test

The total data in the pre and post-tests were normally distributed ($p = 0.20$). Based on this, a T-test was carried out and results indicated the mean of words read correctly from the total of students ($N = 22$) (Mean = 221.55 in the pre-test and Mean = 243.22 in the post-test) with a standard deviation of 42.20 and 30.20 respectively. There was a difference statistically significant ($p > 0.001$) after comparing those data (table 2). The mean of words read correctly that increased in the post-test ($M = 21.68$; $SD = 18.88$) could be observed.

In Figure 1 it can be observed the frequency of the students' responses in relation to the survey about translanguaging. There were 10 Likert-scale questions and 9 of the 10 questions were related to the use of translanguaging and how students felt when applying it. One question (the second one) was about the exclusive use of English during classes.

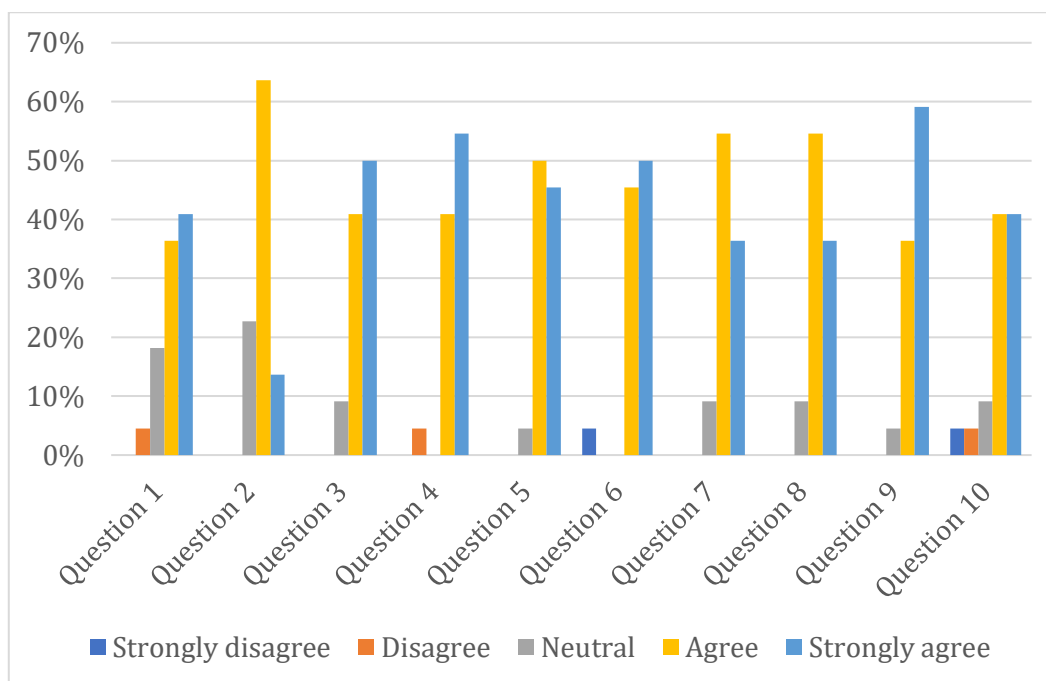


Figure 1. Students' survey



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Most students agreed and strongly agreed with the usefulness of translinguaging and its positive use. The mean of 8 questions is 4 (agree) and the mean of 2 questions is 5 (strongly agree). This showed a contradiction since the second question was related to the exclusive use of English during classes. This information will be discussed in the next section.

Figure 2, on the other hand, shows the English teacher's answers regarding the survey. Similar to the students' survey, 8 questions were related to translinguaging, specifically her perception about students' motivation, participation, and confidence, and how useful she considers translinguaging was during her English classes. The first 2 questions were dichotomic (yes/no) concerning the knowledge of the term "translinguaging" and its use in her foreign language class.

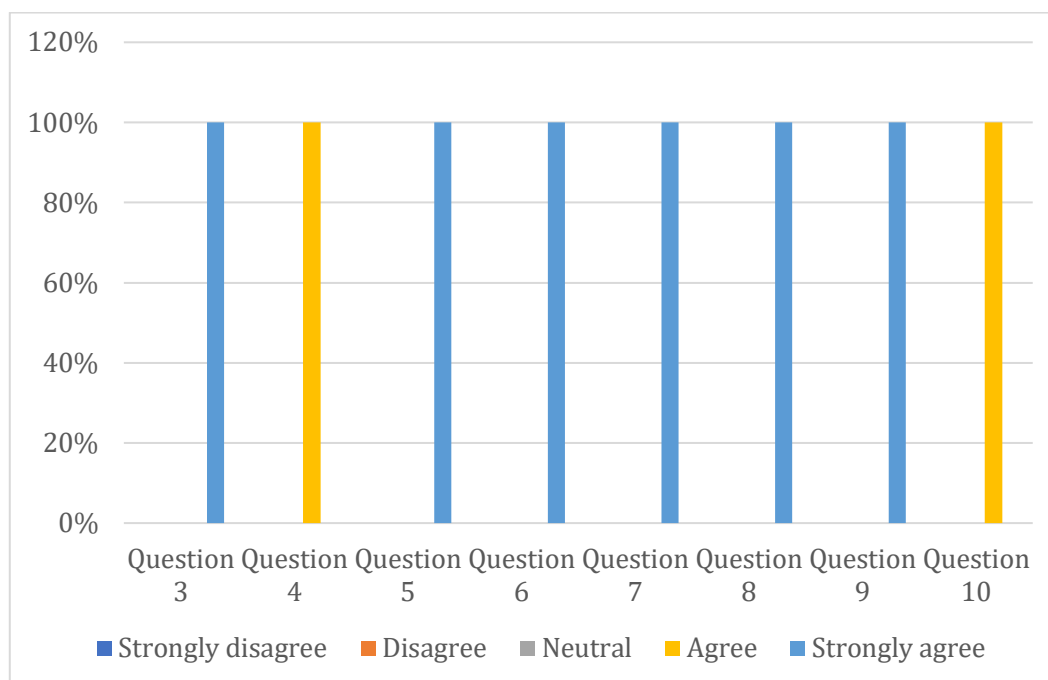


Figure 2. Teacher's survey

Regarding the teacher's survey, she states that she does know and uses translinguaging in her classes (2 first questions, not shown in figure 2). Eight questions were about how the teacher perceived her students when applying translinguaging. Six questions show the teacher's total agreement about translinguaging and 2 questions show an agreement about this approach.

5. Discussion

The results showed a significant improvement in students' oral reading proficiency, which probably indicates the usefulness of applying translanguage during English classes in a foreign language context. Makalela (2015a, p. 204) conducted a similar study in which there was a control and an experimental group, but the difference in students' oral reading proficiency after applying translanguage was not statistically significant. Consequently, the author stated that these results were inconclusive. Despite the non-existence of other studies based on translingualism and oral reading proficiency (in Ecuador and other countries), some research focused on reading ability. For example, a study conducted at a university in Azuay-Ecuador found a decrease in this ability after the application of



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translanguage for one month. The author stated that it could be due to the "attention and/or immersion of the student during the reading exercises or because of the reading itself that could have been more challenging" (Valdiviezo, 2019, p. 105). However, this study shows opposite results indicating the probable benefits of the approach used.

In addition, Garcia (2020) determined that the use of translanguage is a resource for reading in depth about history and other content as "the class begins to understand that how they use language and what they know is the most important thing to make sense of reading any text" (p. 561). In addition, Hungwe (2019) used translanguage during college classes and students were able to understand and convey the meaning of texts by allowing for language fluency, so the author recommended "employing a translanguage strategy in their classrooms to help students understand texts" (p. 8). According to what students reported in this study, they also strongly agree with a better understanding of content when translanguage is used (see Figure 1, question 6).

Another study that can corroborate this result when using translanguage to teach reading comprehension in elementary school and to teach an indigenous language in an institution of higher education is one that used various strategies such as alternating languages in vocabulary induction exercises, reading the text silently, aloud, etc., and showed a gain in reading comprehension concluding that translanguage is a pedagogical strategy that can deepen content comprehension (Makalela, 2015b, p. 23). Carroll and Sambolin (2016, p. 253) conducted a study focused on vocabulary and grammar building strategies, with a secondary focus on reading and writing for academic purposes. The translanguage approach was implemented to increase student engagement and provide a meaningful literacy experience. Its use had several benefits, one being that it allowed students to focus on demonstrating their reading comprehension by not limiting their responses as a result of their language proficiency and made "instruction more meaningful for students" (Carroll & Sambolin, 2016, p. 259).

There is also a significant number of studies whose results show the positive effect of using this approach in pedagogical contexts. For example, a study that emphasized the writing skill shows that "translanguaging probably creates more engaged reading than monolingual writing" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 16). On the other hand, a science classroom with emergent bilinguals used translanguaging with different purposes. It helped students engage in meaning-making, and it resulted in greater opportunities to access the scientific content (Infante & Licona, 2018, p. 10). However, one of the studies which have been carried out in foreign language classrooms states that students do not have much exposure to English outside the school, therefore, they do not have opportunities to practice English. In this scenario, the teacher used translanguaging as a scaffold device so that students can make meaning (Ortega, 2019, p. 165). The same happens in this educational context, where students receive limited English classes (40 or 80 minutes per week), and additionally, they have a low English level; thus, it is challenging to manage an English-only method. That is why translanguaging could be seen as a useful approach not only to teach content but also to engage students in their learning.

Regarding the translanguaging strategies applied, Celic and Seltzer (2016, p. 2) express that cognates tables are useful tools for emergent bilinguals because these words illustrate linguistic connections through different languages. About comparisons of grammar, Galante et al., (2020) explain "students can reflect on whether the same grammatical form exists in their languages and how similar or different it is" (p.983). Likewise, Celic and Seltzer (2016, p. 5) state that it is important to make learners aware of how syntax is similar to or different from their native language so that the use of the target language can be more transparent.



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Instead of teaching them exclusively English, using both languages could help make connections, transfer understanding, and notice important differences. In addition, using prior knowledge and languages that learners are already proficient in can be a powerful tool for developing a language and this is considered an advantage (Cummins, 2007, p. 234; Galante et al., 2020, p. 993).

Adopting a translanguage pedagogy allows to deepen the explanations to the students of some specific topics (García & Wei, 2014, p. 65), it allows "to make language teaching more flexible and to move away the stress that EFL teachers may experience when thinking rigidly about the exclusive use of English in the classroom" (Ortega, 2019, p. 160). In this study, the previous advantages exposed by different authors could be confirmed, since according to the perceptions and experiences of the students and the teacher, they agree and strongly agree with the usefulness of translanguage to compare and contrast the structures of both languages, and to clarify various explanations, contents and meanings (see Figure 1 and 2, questions 7, 8 and 9).

The rest of the results of the surveys applied to the students and the teacher show that the translanguage helped the students to feel motivated, to be more confident, to participate more and to feel that their knowledge increased (see Figure 1, questions 3, 4, 5 and 10). For the teacher, the situation was similar. She felt that the students were more motivated, participated more, understood more and felt more comfortable during the lessons when their mother tongue was taken into account (see Figure 2, questions 4, 5, 6 and 10). There are similar results regarding students' perceptions and attitudes towards translanguage in the study conducted by Valdiviezo (2019, p. 40) where the majority of students (80 %) are in favor of the use of the mother tongue during English classes as they use it for various purposes.

On the question related to the exclusive use of English and the contradiction found, an oral clarification was made to the students and most of them (20) said that they had misunderstood the question and that they agreed with the positive use of the translanguage. This occurred despite the validation of the questions. Therefore, the results confirm the quantitative data on the possible usefulness of translanguage in students' oral reading proficiency and during English lessons in general. However, contrary attitudes may exist when translanguage is used during classes, e.g., Fallas and Dillard-Paltrineri (2015) conducted a search in a foreign language context. It found that most participants believed that translanguage is an ineffective approach, as it "creates a habit of laziness on the part of learners, and consists only of translating back and forth from L1 to L2" (p. 324). However, they also acknowledged that mixing L1 and L2 is a natural process.

As Yilmaz (2019) expresses, translanguage enables "teachers to increase learners' comprehension and engagement by creating rich developmental zones" (p. 9). Furthermore, the use of translanguage as a strategy produces "positive experiences that would not have been possible through traditional language teaching approaches" (Makalela, 2015b, p. 21). This is also confirmed by Makalela (2015a, p. 215), who found that breaking down the boundaries between languages provides learners with positive school experience. All in all, it can be expressed that translanguage could be a useful tool that can be used in a foreign language context since it can help to improve students' skills, and students and a teacher had positive experiences when using it in classes. Students are not empty vessels, they are not learning from scratch, and when translanguage is used with a purpose, it likely has beneficial effects on students' learning and experiences. As stated by Cenoz & Gorter (2020), "the key idea is that there is no replacement of one language by another. Pedagogical translanguage aims at the development of school languages and academic content" (p. 8).



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The purpose of pedagogic translanguaging is to serve as a scaffold device to “help students during a transition phase while they are adding and appropriating the necessary features that are required to complete the academic task in one or more named languages” (García & Wei, 2018, p. 4). Additionally, some authors declare that “the alternation, integration and flexible use of languages have proven beneficial for language learning, especially in the initial stages” (Portolés & Martí, 2016, p. 66; García & Wei, 2014, p. 36). “Translanguaging is practised as a co-constructed strategy to empower, and shakes the monoglossic stereotype of foreign language teaching” (Wang, 2016, p. 148). It facilitates comprehension and allows emergent bilinguals to tackle challenging academic tasks in a language they are yet developing (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 5).

Nevertheless, one of the limitations of this study was time since it was carried out during one unit, and in the ideal situation, a whole school year would be studied as other studies have done like in Makalela’s study (2015a, p. 205). Another limitation was the absence of a control group and the impossibility to take into account different variables that could have also influenced the results. The online classes represent also a limitation since it is the first time this modality is being carried out in Ecuadorian educational institutions because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. Conclusions

After determining the reliability of the obtained data regarding the students’ oral reading proficiency, it is liable translanguaging improved this skill in students after applying it for 6 weeks. Furthermore, learners and the teacher who participated in this study had positive experiences and perceptions after the application of this approach. As stated by Wei (2017), translanguaging “is powerful and transformative when we are aware that what we do is enabling and empowering our students. With this awareness, we can then begin to do it consciously, purposefully, as an effective pedagogical tool for learning” (p.3). Translanguaging can serve as a useful tool during classes because it not only focuses on learning content, but also takes into consideration the students’ prior knowledge, values it, and uses it to learn a new language.

Besides, the approach teachers decide to apply in classes should be strongly influenced by the specific contexts, not only of the educational setting and institution but also on students’ contexts and their knowledge. There is not an ideal strategy to teach, however, several methodologies have been tested and they have proved their efficacy, one of them could be translanguaging since, as stated before, it does not harm the language skills when learning a language if it is implemented correctly (Nagy, 2018, p. 50).

Other studies could incorporate a control group and an experimental group to obtain more valid results on the usefulness of translanguaging and take into account variables such as the economic level of the students, teacher training or the geographic location of the center, which can influence the results. To obtain external validity, more participants should be included in the study in order to generalize the results. Also, more research could focus on different skills, as “translanguaging can be implemented in a wide range of activities for practicing various language skills such as speaking, writing, reading, or listening” (Nagy, 2018, p. 47). There should be more studies on translanguaging that focus on foreign language classrooms.



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