

TRANSLANGUAGING FOR TEACHING-LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO CHILDREN

Translenguaje para la enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera en niños

A translanguagem para o ensino-aprendizagem de inglês como língua estrangeira em crianças

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Translanguaging is a pedagogical strategy that permits educators to utilize their native language as a tool to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It enables students to feel comfortable and engaged in the learning process, leading to better comprehension and retention of the language. This research aims to analyze the impact of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in teaching English to children as a foreign language. **Materials and methods:** The methodology focused on a pre-experimental design with a mixed approach to study translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in children located at Canton Chone, Manabí, Ecuador with a sample of 20 students from a private Ecuadorian elementary school who attended regular education during the 2023-2024 school year. The instruments used are pre-test, logbooks to describe the reality to students before and after the treatment, and post-test. **Results and discussion:** The results show that translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy significantly improved participants' motivation, participation, and knowledge, as it helped them understand instructions and explanations about a topic and use the EFL more confidently without fear of making mistakes. **Conclusions:** It is concluded that translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy has a positive impact on the teaching-learning of the English language, encouraging students not only to like the language but also to use it without fear.

Keywords: translanguaging, English language, teaching-learning.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El translenguaje es una estrategia pedagógica que permite a los educadores utilizar su idioma nativo como herramienta para enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera, esto ayuda a los estudiantes sentirse cómodos e involucrados en el proceso de aprendizaje, lo que lleva a una mejor comprensión y retención del idioma. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto del translenguaje como estrategia pedagógica en la enseñanza del inglés a niños como lengua extranjera. **Materiales y métodos:** La metodología se centró en un diseño preexperimental con enfoque mixto para estudiar el translenguaje como estrategia pedagógica en niños ubicados en el Cantón Chone, Manabí, Ecuador con una muestra de 20 estudiantes de una escuela primaria privada ecuatoriana que cursaron educación regular durante el año 2023. Los instrumentos utilizados son el pre-test, diarios para describir la realidad a los estudiantes antes y después del tratamiento y el post-test. **Resultados y discusión:** Los resultados muestran que translenguaje como estrategia pedagógica mejoró significativamente la motivación, participación y conocimiento de los participantes en sus cuatro habilidades, ya que les ayudó a comprender instrucciones, explicaciones sobre un tema y utilizar el inglés como lengua extranjera con más confianza sin temor a cometer errores. **Conclusiones:** Se concluye que el translenguaje como estrategia pedagógica tiene un impacto positivo en la enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés fomentando no solo que los estudiantes les guste el idioma, sino que también lo usen sin temor.

Palabras clave: translenguaje, idioma inglés, enseñanza-aprendizaje.

RESUME

Introdução: A translinguagem é uma estratégia pedagógica que permite aos educadores utilizarem sua língua nativa como ferramenta para ensinar inglês como língua estrangeira, isso ajuda os alunos a se sentirem confortáveis e envolvidos no processo de aprendizagem, levando a uma melhor compreensão e retenção da língua. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar o impacto da translinguagem como estratégia pedagógica no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira para crianças. Materiais e métodos: A metodologia centrou-se em um desenho pré-experimental com abordagem mista para estudar a translinguagem como estratégia pedagógica em crianças localizadas no Cantão Chone, Manabí, Equador, com uma amostra de 20 alunos de uma escola primária privada equatoriana que frequentavam o ensino regular. educação durante o ano de 2023. Os instrumentos utilizados são o pré-teste, diários para descrever a realidade aos alunos antes e depois do tratamento e o pós-teste. Resultados e discussão: Os resultados mostram que a translinguagem como estratégia pedagógica melhorou significativamente a motivação, a participação e o conhecimento dos participantes em suas quatro habilidades, pois os ajudou a compreender instruções, explicações sobre um tema e a usar o inglês como língua estrangeira com mais confiança . sem medo de errar. Conclusões: Conclui-se que a translinguagem como estratégia pedagógica impacta positivamente no ensino-aprendizagem da língua inglesa, estimulando os alunos não apenas a gostarem da língua, mas também a utilizá-la sem medo.

Palavras-chave: translinguagem, língua inglesa, ensino-aprendizagem.

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INTRODUCTION

English is the most taught foreign language worldwide because it has many benefits, however, the educational process of EFL is challenging in nations where it is typically focused on academic settings and does not occupy a central position in social contexts. (Rustamov 2022)

Ecuador is not the exception, its curricular threads promote the development of learners' understanding of the world, the development of personal, social, and intellectual skills, and create a love of learning language starting at a young age (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Even though, its main goals are implemented in public and private schools Ecuador maintains a low level of proficiency in the EFL, ranked low at #80 (EF English Proficiency Index, 2023).

This research occurs in a private school in the canton Chone, province of Manabí where EFL instruction consists of 5 hours per week for four months, due to institutions considering the English language a priority for integral student education. However, students often struggle to understand the EFL since the school's policy requires teachers to speak only English. This can lead to weak comprehension and fear among students when attempting to participate or share their ideas in English.

According to Sahib (2019), teachers use translanguaging as a strategy to have assertive communication, assist in teaching English as a foreign language, and interest students in using their native language to support their learning while encouraging them. For instance, the teaching-learning process can be perceived as a convergence of ideas using both languages rather than a simple transmission of knowledge as a dynamic exchange that involves the active participation of both the learner and the educator. (Hounsell 1997)

This problem requires the attention of educational research to be emphatic and motivate the educational process to learn without the anxiety of the EFL. Therefore, the researcher's motivation for doing this work is to improve the children's understanding of the teaching-learning EFL process.

This research aims to analyze the impact of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in teaching English to children as a foreign language. Besides the first specific objective is to identify the level of the students at the beginning of the research, the second is to explain the efficient use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to improve the understanding, and the last one is to determine children's progress in the EFL when a teacher uses translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy.

For that reason, these specific objectives answer the following questions: 1. What is the level of students' English skills at the beginning of the research? (pre-test) 2. How to use efficiently translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to improve the student's understanding? (logbook) 3. What is children's progress in the EFL when a teacher uses translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy? (post-test)

Expecting to contribute to the innovation of the teaching-learning process of EFL in elementary education

using translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, the research team begins this work with the review of the concepts of (1) Teaching-learning English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador to children, (2) Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in EFL.

Teaching-learning English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador to children

Education influences a child's life since engagement with school and learning assists one in developing skills to succeed academically and build and maintain social relationships (Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, 2019). Children's brains' plasticity tends to have an optimum period for language acquisition where it is easier to learn and relearn new things than adults. (Thadphoothon, 2019)

Acquiring a new language during childhood can present a comparatively more straightforward process, although this is contingent upon various factors and contextual elements. Regardless Krashen's affective filter hypothesis emphasizes that when feelings of anxiety, fear, or embarrassment are prominent for a learner, effective language acquisition cannot occur. In contrast, learners with high motivation, self-confidence, self-esteem, and low anxiety, are highly likely to learn effectively. (Balashova, 2023)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a process of acquiring the language (learning) and linguistic, social, and psychological factors may be the ones that play important roles in determining success in learning (Verspoor & Rein, 2011). According to the Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (2016), the role of the school in the area of English Language Teaching (ELT) is to expand, enhance, support, and enrich all learners' linguistic, aesthetic, and thought capabilities in the course of their learning process.

The curriculum of EFL in elementary school pretends to foster a love for learning languages from a young age and to create engaging and positive learning experiences that will motivate learners to continue learning English throughout their EGB and BGU education, as well as in their future work and beyond. (Ministerio de Educación, 2019)

Its policies emphasize that elementary schools should have three hours a week during their school period devoted to instrumental areas. However, educational institutions can adjust the workload in these areas according to the individual needs of students, aiming to achieve curricular objectives at each grade and level. Likewise, using both L1 and L2 could be beneficial because prior knowledge of L1 can clarify and support learning L2 but some private high schools prioritize the exclusive use of L2 based on their beliefs.

The Ministerio de Educación (2019), expected the level of proficiency for elementary school students to be pre-basic user A1.1. Typically, students in this grade range from six to seven years old and are expected to learn grammar and vocabulary in specific contexts through various strategies, including games, songs, and other play activities. These activities should focus on the four curricular threads: communication and cultural awareness, oral communication (listening and speaking), reading, and writing.

During the process of teaching-learning teachers have one of the most relevant roles, they should support students' autonomy, relevance, relatedness, competence, and self-efficacy in teaching. (Johnson, 2017). Fostering effective learning that leads to changes in emotions, attitudes, and values which influence thinking and behavior (Allen & Friedman, 2010)

In this way, the EFL process can be significant in helping students develop their skills, as the teacher fosters a positive environment in which EFL is taught is crucial, classroom settings provide structured and systematic language instruction, which helps to build a strong foundation education, it can be beneficial for children who thrive in structured learning environments and benefit from the guidance of trained educators.

Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in EFL

Based on the real context of the social part of Ecuador does not use the EFL in real situations, so it is fundamental to use appropriate pedagogical strategies to empower the educational process. According to Syafrizal and Haerudin (2018), strategies are steps or actions taken to win a war because they focus on goal-directed actions for improving language proficiency or achievement, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, effective, and easier. (Oxford, 2011).

In the teaching-learning process, there are various strategies focused on children, including active learning, lectures, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, gamification, and translanguaging. The strategies aim to empower and facilitate teachers to innovate the learning environment and align with the needs of students. (Paragae, 2023).

It is essential to keep in mind that before selecting one strategy is relevant to analyze the level, needs, and

requirements of students to foment an inclusive education that focuses on the students understanding English and feeling comfortable participating more in classes.

Focus on translanguaging as a pedagogical part emphasizes the designer of instructional strategies that carefully integrate two or more languages (Omidire & Ayob, 2022) in the teaching-learning in EFL is important to move away from traditionalism and focus on children to encourage and create a didactic way of understanding the language. (Garcia, 2009)

Translanguaging is used in EFL classrooms for various functions according to Yuvayapan (2019) giving instructions usually done in L1 to ensure that students understand, review language in both languages to express their ideas, and elicit language used by teachers to clarify more open-ended conditions of students through asking. For that reason, learning becomes more relevant and comfortable because students can appropriate their own linguistic and semiotic resources to express their ideas through translanguaging.

Its strategy helps in the development of students, for that reason, in the curriculum of Ecuador efficacy, the importance of EFL using the L1, in the development of their skills: Listening skills to minimize difficulties in the process and ensure that learners can apply the L1 listening strategies to L2 comprehension. Reading skills focus on comprehension and involve the contrast between L1 and L2 in noticing how texts are understood.

Writing skills have important aspects one of them using the L1 students to recognize differences of L2 identifying specific formats within text types. In the end, speaking skills emphasized the motivation and self-confidence of using the EFL because feel comfortable in the classroom and can say their ideas, and opinions and also have more participation.

However, during the development of English classes is fundamental to have a balance because translanguaging as a strategy complements the learning process to support students' learning while encouraging them to engage with English as much as possible.

Concerning the previous studies of this research, the work of Sahib (2019) relating to a teacher's interview showed that the use of translanguaging can help students understand the content's subject because in some cases certain vocabulary is not familiar but when explained in their L1 they have a better understanding.

Studies by Ali et al. (2023), have shown that students increased their comfort level using their L1 during the class, fostering a more inclusive supportive learning environment for diverse EFL classrooms using translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy.

Research by Kim and Weng (2022) accentuated that translanguaging pedagogy created an inclusive learning environment, facilitated EFL, and increased student participation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The nature of this design was pre-experimental, where a single group of participants was observed during the treatment. The method was mixed to study the variable of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in children located in a private school at Canton Chone, Manabí, Ecuador, having 118 students as population and using a sample of 20 students their socioeconomic status is typically between high and middle, 55% male and 45% female, ages 6 to 7 years in the second grade of an elementary school. The strategy of translanguaging was applied 3 days a week divided into Mondays 2 hours, Tuesdays 1 hour, and Fridays 2 hours having a total of 5 hours during the week and 20 hours per month based on the topic of the unit using different ways such as introducing content, clarifying ideas, giving feedback or instructions, explaining grammar structures and vocabulary. SPSS is the software used to check the reliability of research instruments such as:

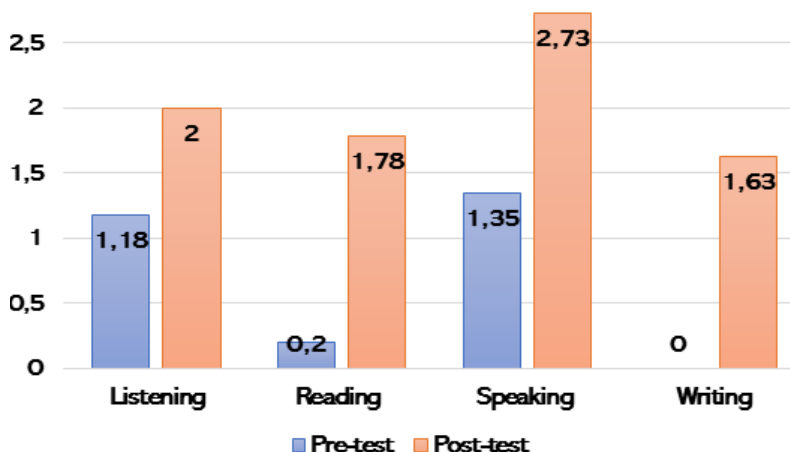
To Berry (2008) the pre-test is used to determine pre-existing knowledge about a subject and is non-graded. For that reason, the purpose of the use of this instrument is to identify the level of students' skills in EFL at the beginning of the research. The total number of items is 10 that focus on the four skills and 7 experts tested the instrument in the field of EFL. Based on, Cronbach's of the pre-test questions is $>0,789$ being reliable.

According to Meerkerk, E. (2017), the logbook is where teachers must always write their information after an event of interest. Thus, the purpose of using this instrument is to document the experiences, reactions, and notions of how to use efficient translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy with students. The data is analyzed using self-ethnography to study what others do, and what these doings and sayings could have meant. (Eriksson, 2010)

Budert (2023) emphasizes that a post-test measures knowledge obtained after treatment. This instrument aims to identify children's progress in the EFL after the teacher uses translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. The total number of items is 10 that focus on the four skills, and 7 experts tested the instrument in the field of EFL. Focus on the Cronbach's of the post-test questions is >0,826.being reliable.

RESULTS

Two questions were considered that emphasize the understanding of greetings and basic instructions. In the pre-test, only 1.18% of the students scored over 2%, indicating they understood simple greetings like good morning, hello, and goodbye. However, in the post-test, this number increased to 2%, indicating a significant improvement in the student's ability to understand more greetings, including good afternoon, good evening, goodbye, and see you tomorrow. Additionally, they showed improvement in understanding basic instructions such as open your book, raise your hand, pay attention, come here, write on the board, look at your teacher, close the door, and comprehending the teacher's explanations about the topic.



Graphic 1 Analysis of the level of students' skills in the pre-test and post-test.

Note. The figure shows the pre-test and post-test results in a private elementary school's second grade from 2023 to 2024.

On another hand, two questions were considered in reading ability to analyze and understand the main idea, then giving their personal opinion about the topic. In the pre-test, only 0.2% over 2% of students attempted to comprehend and get involved with the text about "my favorite toy" but did not understand and felt confused. Nevertheless, in the post-test, 1.78% out of 2% showed an enormous improvement in their understanding and critical thinking.

To assess speaking skills, three questions were used that emphasized the criterion of comprehension, coherence, and pronunciation. Regarding the pre-test, 1.35% to 3% of the overall score of students answered simple questions like "How are you?" And "What is your name?" However, the post-test showed that 2.73% of the score was achieved by answering more open and closed questions such as "What is your favorite color?" "Could you describe your body?" And "Can you swim?"

Finally, the writing skills assessment focused on vocabulary and grammar structure, with two questions designed to evaluate these areas. In the pre-test, the students scored 0% out of 3% struggling to write basic vocabulary as greetings, colors, or numbers in English.

However, the post-test demonstrated a significant improvement of 1,63%, as students successfully used simple present tense, demonstrative adjectives, and verbs "can" and "cannot". For example, they were able to write sentences like, e.g., "I do my homework", "I have two eyes", and "There is a pencil."

Table 1 Analysis of logbook

Categories of analysis
Lesson 1: Clarify
Lesson 2: Participation
Lesson 3: Motivation
Lesson 4: Feedback

Note. Data from lessons recorded in the logbook.

Lesson 1: Clarify – Jun 2023

I remember the first day of the intervention. I prepared a class using translanguaging. Likewise, I planned to teach the topic of the school materials. The students were initially curious about this new strategy. The class paid much more attention when I used some Spanish words in some sentences in English to clarify new vocabulary. Although some authorities emphasized the exclusive use of English, at the end of the class, the students were able to recall a higher number of new words due to the connections they made between L1 and L2 explanations.

Inal and Turbanli (2019) support teaching low proficiency level students, it is helpful to use their native language (L1) to make them aware of the differences and similarities between L1 and the target language (L2).

Lesson 2: Participation– August 2023

I feel proud of student A, who, despite feeling nervous, participated in today's class with confidence in reading sentences about parts of the house. I think the previous indication using translanguaging was so helpful in understanding the idea and created a positive environment to allow students to perform better in the classroom.

Berlianti and Pradita (2021) state that translanguaging in the classroom can enhance understanding, promote critical thinking, and foster metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic flexibility.

Lesson 3: Motivation– October 2023

The classes for the Ecuadorian general election were held virtually, focusing on specific parts of the body. At the start of the class, the students felt demotivated by the virtual modality. During the class, the explanation in L2 was challenging to comprehend due to the poor connection. However, students started to feel motivated when I implemented didactic presentation games and used translanguaging to explain how to create sentences focused on the parts of the body. By the end of the lesson, the children were able to create three sentences perfectly.

To Alshenqeeti (2018) motivation increases the students' responsibility for their learning and gives them autonomy to develop the activities.

Lesson 4: Feedback - December 2023

On some days, student E was noticeably absent and missed the topic about action verbs. I meticulously try to ask students, varying L1 and L2 around the class, to create constructive feedback. Can you swim? No, I cannot. When I asked student E, Can you write? — escribir, she correctly answered the questions. — Yes, I can.

According to Maslova, et al. (2022), Feedback helps students how to improve specific points through the teacher's information.

DISCUSSION

The literature review and the results obtained in this research allow the authors to agree with the position of Sahib (2019) when he affirms that the use of translanguaging can help students understand the content's subject because, in some cases, certain vocabulary is not familiar, but when explained in their L1, they have a better understanding. Based on the results obtained in this research, the use of translanguaging clarifies the comprehension of students in vocabulary, grammar structure, and doubts.

Moreover, the authors confirm the position of studies by Ali et al. (2023), which have shown that students increased their comfort level using their L1 during the class, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for diverse EFL classrooms employing translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. Regarding the results obtained, students' motivation and communication improved due to reduced frustration in English classes.

Research by Kim (2022) accentuated that translanguaging as a pedagogy strategy created an inclusive learning environment, facilitated EFL, and increased student participation. Therefore, the positive results of the post-test demonstrate the potential of applying translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in elementary school. Many students found EFL to be their favorite subject, allowing them to express their ideas, knowledge, and feelings comfortably in class, creating an assertive environment.

The logbook analysis revealed that translanguaging is a helpful strategy that teachers could implement to teach EFL according to an aim with other supporting activities. It allows understand more EFL and feel relaxed. Both instruments were essential and found that students could improve their four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In terms of listening, students demonstrated better abilities to understand basic instructions, comprehend simple conversations, and develop their overall listening skills. For speaking, students improved by answering simple questions and giving presentations. In reading, students could understand the main idea of the text. Lastly, in writing, students could create sentences based on their experiences and reality.

The researchers' findings indicate that EFL was a popular subject among students during the 2023-2024 school year, which was unprecedented in the institution. This highlights the importance of using appropriate strategies to foment positivity empower the environment of students and increase their interest in EFL.

CONCLUSIONS

Translanguaging is a strategy that involves the integration of their native language and the foreign language, deviating from traditional language teaching strategies based on L2, emphasizing a more engaging and interactive way to teach, learn, and comprehend English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Empowers children using translanguaging as a strategy to develop their language skills and allows them to feel comfortable utilizing their language abilities without hesitation, thus promoting a more effective and confident language learning experience.

The students' motivation increased using the strategy of translanguaging for dynamism, allowing them to increase their knowledge, participate more with self-confidence, and convert EFL into one of their favorite subjects in elementary school, setting aside the belief that the English language is boring and useless.

Limitations and recommendations

Translanguaging was sometimes challenging due to the policy of the school, since authorities prohibited English teachers from using their native language.

There are instances where translanguaging or using a second language couldn't be utilized because of holidays and extracurricular activities.

The treatment was not possible to apply in two grades because of the characteristics and numbers of the students.

Use translanguaging as a strategy in the early years of schooling. At this stage, students can effectively develop their English skills by frequently utilizing both their native and foreign languages in relevant contexts, fostering a more effective teaching and learning environment.

Teachers should conduct a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the school year to determine students' level of knowledge and identify how to use the strategy of translanguaging in delivering instruction, providing feedback, and explaining grammar and vocabulary concepts.

Motivate and engage students during the classes using translanguaging as a strategy personalized to their needs, fostering confidence, and putting away the idea that English is a boring and challenging subject.

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Conflicto de intereses

Los autores declaran no tener ningún conflicto de intereses.

Declaración de responsabilidad de autoría

Los autores del manuscrito señalado, DECLARAMOS que hemos contribuido directamente a su contenido intelectual, así como a la génesis y análisis de sus datos; por lo cual, estamos en condiciones de hacernos públicamente responsable de él y aceptamos que sus nombres figuren en la lista de autores en el orden indicado. Además, hemos cumplido los requisitos éticos de la publicación mencionada, habiendo consultado la Declaración de Ética y mala praxis en la publicación.

Julexsi Beatriz Arteaga Pazmiño y Genny Elizabeth Zambrano Gallardo: Proceso de revisión de literatura y redacción del artículo.