



Translanguaging Between English and Spanish and Positive Identities in the Spanish as a Second Language Classroom at a Private School in Asunción

El Translenguaje entre el Inglés y el Español e Identidades Positivas en el Aula de Español como Segunda Lengua en un Colegio Privado en Asunción

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Abstract

Even though Paraguay is a bilingual country, most language institutes have a monolingual policy, and they do not allow students to use their first language in the classroom. This can be an obstacle to fostering positive identities, which can negatively affect students' academic success (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). This research draws upon Translanguaging theory to explore how this practice influences the development of students' positive identities when learning a foreign language. The study also aims to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of Translanguaging practices. A descriptive case study was conducted in a private school in Asunción, capital of Paraguay, where a Translanguaging methodology is implemented in the Spanish as a second language (SSL) classroom with international students. An online survey, interviews with teachers, a focus group with students, and class observations were conducted. The data revealed that Translanguaging offers various benefits when learning a second language. For instance, Translanguaging helps in understanding new vocabulary, explaining grammar, and clarifying concepts. The results showed this practice also fosters aspects related to identity, such as self-expression. However, students and teachers also acknowledged one of the main drawbacks of Translanguaging: dominant language overuse. The general results showed that teachers and students perceive Translanguaging as a useful pedagogy for learning a new language and for fostering positive identities in the language classroom.

Keywords: Translanguaging, positive identities, bilingual education, Spanish as a second language (SSL), teacher pedagogy

Resumen

A pesar de que el Paraguay es un país bilingüe, la mayoría de los institutos de idiomas tienen una política monolingüe, y no permiten que los estudiantes utilicen su lengua nativa en el aula. Esto puede ser un obstáculo para fomentar identidades positivas, lo cual puede afectar negativamente el éxito académico de los estudiantes (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). Esta investigación se basa en la teoría del Translenguaje para explorar cómo esta práctica influye en el desarrollo de las identidades positivas de los estudiantes cuando aprenden una lengua extranjera. El estudio también pretende explorar las percepciones de estudiantes y profesores sobre las prácticas del Translenguaje. Un estudio de caso descriptivo fue realizado en un colegio privado de Asunción, capital de Paraguay, donde se implementa la metodología del Translenguaje en el aula de español como segundo idioma con estudiantes internacionales. Se llevó a cabo una encuesta en línea, entrevistas con profesores, un grupo focal con estudiantes y observaciones de clases. Los datos revelaron que el Translenguaje ofrece varios beneficios a la hora de aprender una segunda lengua. Por ejemplo, el Translenguaje ayuda a comprender vocabulario nuevo, a explicar gramática y a clarificar conceptos. Los resultados mostraron que esta práctica también fomenta aspectos relacionados con la identidad, como la autoexpresión. Sin embargo, los alumnos y profesores también reconocieron uno de los principales inconvenientes del Translenguaje: el uso excesivo de la lengua dominante. Los resultados generales mostraron que profesores y alumnos perciben el Translenguaje como una pedagogía útil para aprender una nueva lengua y para fomentar identidades positivas en el aula de idiomas.

Palabras clave: Translenguaje, identidades positivas, educación bilingüe, español como segunda lengua, pedagogía docente

Music teacher: How do you feel when you sing?
Ruby: I don't know. It's hard to explain.
Music teacher: Try. (Heder, 2021, 0:32:28)

Ruby found it hard to explain in words, so she started using sign language, her first language.

For a long time, language programs have allocated students' languages to separate classes to promote their language development. The isolation of the target language is key in various second language teaching methods and approaches, including the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method, and the Communicative Approach (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). As Cook (2001) argued, the use of the L1 can be perceived as a failure, and the ideal language classroom should contain "as little of the L1 as possible" (p. 404). According to Ortega (2019), this perspective on language isolation examines second language acquisition with "monolingual first language acquisition as the main point of reference" (p. 24). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this practice has been questioned due to social, psychological, cognitive, and affective factors present in the classroom, such as positive identities. According to Reimann (2011), these factors play a crucial role in motivation, attitude, and level of competence. Therefore, other approaches, such as Translanguaging, have been proposed (Yilmaz, 2021).

This study investigates the role of Translanguaging between Spanish and English in the formation of positive identities in a Spanish as a second language (SSL) classroom in an elite private school in Asunción as well as students' and teachers' attitudes toward this practice. This research paper aims to reveal that students who are taught through a Translanguaging methodology in the second language classroom have various benefits in their learning, including the development of positive identities.

Paraguay is a bilingual country that has two official languages: Spanish and Guaraní. According to the National Institute of Statistics (Última Hora, 2023), 33.4% of the Paraguayan population speaks Guaraní most frequently, 34.9% speaks Jopará (a mix of both languages), and 29.6% speaks Spanish most of the time. Notably, there is little published research on Translanguaging in Paraguay. Some students have rich multilingual backgrounds that are highly beneficial resources for language acquisition, yet these resources are frequently ignored. It is a fact that most language institutes and bilingual schools in Paraguay discourage their students from using their native language or other languages apart from the one being learned during the lessons. From a Translanguaging perspective, these students are constrained in learning and expression (García & Wei, 2014). This fact can be a barrier to promoting positive identities in the classroom. Grosjean (1989) explained that "the bilingual is an integrated whole which cannot easily be decomposed into two separate parts. The bilingual is NOT the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration" (p. 6).

Considering these issues, the main purpose of this study was to determine the role of Translanguaging in developing positive identities in students when learning a second language by investigating the benefits of this practice, its possible drawbacks, and students' and teachers' perceptions of the use of this methodology in the language classroom.

Theoretical Framework

The Use of L1 in the Language Classroom

According to Agudo (2012), there are different arguments regarding L1 use in bilingual classrooms, more precisely how often the mother tongue should be used and to what extent. Most language institutes have as their main policy not to use the L1 during class. In fact, many educators support an English-only curriculum due to institutional pressure and the idea that students would benefit more from using L2 exclusively, leaving L1 behind (Agudo, 2012). According to Krashen (1985), maximum exposure to L2 is seen as a necessary condition for the development of second languages. Krashen (1985) believes that speaking will occur naturally from exposure and input. However, this theory has been questioned by many scholars (Gregg, 1986; McLaughlin, 1987).

In fact, L1 use in second language instruction has recently gotten more emphasis. Research has revealed that all language learners move between the languages they know, and translation occurs automatically while learning a new language; therefore, L1 is a crucial resource in second language learning (Cook, 2001; Woodall, 2002). Moreover, Willis (1996) claimed teachers should not “ban mother-tongue use but encourage attempts to use the target language” (p. 130). Accordingly, Agudo (2012) states that increasing exposure to a second language does not necessarily prevent students from using L1 in the classroom. According to Cummins (2000), comprehensible input is more important than massive exposure to the language.

Benefits of the L1 Use

It is crucial to note that a flexible, constrained, and managed use of L1 may be beneficial for students' second language learning. According to Deller and Rinvolveri (2002), L1 helps make a more relaxed, emotionally comfortable environment in bilingual classes. In order to reduce negative emotions, combat nervousness, and increase confidence, teachers can use students' L1 for their questions, quick revision, summaries, comprehension checks, and other purposes (Collier & Thomas, 2011). The difficulty of adjusting to interaction in the foreign language threatens self-esteem, motivation, and general enjoyment during the early stages of learning a second language (Agudo, 2012).

Medgyes (1994) listed some situations in which L1 may be useful: providing clarification, explaining grammar rules, or contrasting L1 and L2. Similarly, Ernesto Macaro (1997) stated that L1 is useful for giving instruction for classroom tasks, translating some concepts, checking comprehension, giving feedback to students, and maintaining discipline in the classroom. Agudo (2012) stated it is crucial to continue utilizing a small amount of the mother tongue to explain basic ideas and vocabulary in understandable ways.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that most authors on second language acquisition concur on using L1 only when necessary. For instance, Corder (1983) stated that “learners are not slaves to their L1 in learning L2, but use it selectively, in situations where they feel it will be helpful” (p. 29). Otherwise, the use of L1 might result in uncontrolled use. Accordingly, Tang (2002) mentioned that a “limited and judicious use of the mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes” (p. 41). Schweers Jr. (1999) also affirmed that the “pedagogical and affective benefits of L1 use justify its limited and judicious use” (p. 10).

Translanguaging

The expression Translanguaging derives from the Welsh *trawsieithu* and was invented by Cen Williams in 1994 (as cited in García & Wei, 2014). Baker was the first to translate the Welsh term into English and defines it as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 288). Lewis and colleagues (2012) highlighted that Translanguaging refers to utilizing one language to enhance the other in order to improve understanding and boost students’ involvement in both languages.

García (2011) stated that Translanguaging does not simply refer to a shift between two languages but to the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 73). It refers to the development and application of unique, complex, and interconnected discursive practices. This application encompasses the speakers’ entire language repertoire, and it conveys the idea that bilinguals’ languages are functionally integrated rather than having distinct boundaries (García & Wei, 2014).

Benefits of Translanguaging

According to Baker and Wright (2017), Translanguaging has some important benefits. Firstly, Translanguaging encourages a more thorough comprehension of the subject matter. Given that prior knowledge serves as a basis for further learning and cross-linguistic transfer is simple because two languages are interdependent, then Translanguaging is an effective technique to promote understanding in the second language. Second, Translanguaging benefits students in improving their oral and written literacy in their second language. In an effort to achieve a more complete bilingualism and biliteracy, Translanguaging aims to enhance academic language abilities in both languages, for instance, by altering the language of input and output during a lesson. Third, the use of both languages can make home-school collaboration easier. For instance, parents who speak a minority language with their children can help them with their schooling if they can communicate with them in their preferred way.

Translanguaging also has social justice implications. Translanguaging seeks to “dismantle named language categories [and counter] ideologies that position particular languages as superior to others” (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 10). Moreover, Translanguaging pedagogy has the potential to “transform relationships between students, teachers, and the curriculum” (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 10) and fosters a co-learning space (Wei, 2012) where all language practices are equally valued to ensure students are educated deeply and justly (García et al., 2017).

Furthermore, García and Wei (2014) claimed that there are two crucial elements that Translanguaging brings with it: creativity and criticality. Creativity refers to the ability to follow or break the language rules in order to create new forms of communication, while criticality is questioning different views of political, cultural, and social phenomena through discourse. According to García and Wei (2014), criticality is a way to express views through reasoned responses and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by questioning linguistic inequalities. The two concepts of creativity and criticality are essentially linked together and “the best expression of one’s criticality is one’s creativity” (Wei, 2015, p. 180).

Challenges in Translanguaging

Nevertheless, research has shown that there are also some challenges in the use of Translanguaging practices. The primary issue in most bilingual classes is L1 is overused since students seldom ever utilize L2 for natural conversation for the following reasons: low competency in L2, shyness and embarrassment in using L2, or just a lack of interest in studying L2 (Agudo, 2012). According to Fang and Liu (2020), one of the main barriers to teachers adopting Translanguaging is concern regarding pupils' excessive use of L1. Controlling the amount of L1 use was the problem that was most frequently mentioned. One of the teachers who participated in this study expressed, "I think it is hard to control students' language use. Once they are allowed to use some Chinese, they might go further, and things would become out of control. If the degree of L1 use is hard to control, then it is better to not even begin" (p. 13).

Another challenge is students' attitudes toward L1 use in the classroom. The results of the study presented by Agudo (2012) showed that slightly more than half of participants (53.49%) thought that L1 should be used for no more than 20% of class time, or rather that L1 should only be used for at least 10%-20% of the total period while just 18.60% of respondents said that L1 should be used for the majority of the classroom time (60%-80%). As a consequence, students might not feel comfortable performing some activities in the first language, since they want to use the second language as much as possible.

Attitudes Toward Translanguaging Practices

According to research, there is a wide range of viewpoints among instructors on their attitudes regarding Translanguaging (Cenoz et al., 2022). Wang (2019), for instance, discovered that while some teachers supported the Translanguaging methodology, others saw no significance to doing so or felt guilty about applying it, thus they continued to use monolingual approaches. Fang and Liu (2020) stated that even though teachers' attitudes and practices vary, the majority of them acknowledge the value of Translanguaging for content learning, especially for improving comprehension and creating a positive environment.

Correspondingly, research shows that while some students believe that Translanguaging might hinder L2 learning, others hold a positive attitude toward this practice (Carstens, 2016; Rivera & Mazak, 2017). In Ruiz-Perez and Lopez-Hevia's study (2021), a student mentioned that classes must be imparted as much in the second language as possible in order to "get as much practice out of it" (p. 330); otherwise, students might not learn. According to Moody et al. (2019), graduate students largely agreed that Translanguaging should be used in education because it aided their L2 learning. Similarly, Fang and Liu (2020) indicated that students generally have a neutral to positive opinion of Translanguaging procedures.

Translanguaging and Identity

Identity is defined as "the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). The authors explained that the co-construction of identity encompasses the use of linguistic resources as a tool for people to negotiate the meaning of their social position and emerging identities.

A large number of scholars characterize identity as being dynamic, multifaceted, and negotiated through language (Shin, 2017). García (2011) referred to the role of language diversity

in the negotiation and construction of identity and suggests that language choice involves negotiation in every interaction, as particular linguistic resources may provide or prevent access to powerful social networks; that is, multilingual speakers “decide who they want to be and choose their language practices accordingly” (p. 121).

According to Jørgensen (2010), identities originate in interaction among people. Correspondingly, Riley (2008) emphasized that identity is socially generated and that developing a sense of self requires engaging in communication with others. Lee and Suarez (2009) claimed that denying children who have contact with two languages and cultures of either of those damages their senses of identity. They contend that children need to be encouraged to learn both languages and to become a part of both cultures. Language continuously shapes individuals’ perceptions of themselves. Antonio, a fifth grader, described his fluid identity as such: “Even though Spanish runs through my heart, English rules my veins” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 12). According to Peirce (1995), language learners continually organize and reorganize their sense of who they are and how they connect to the social world while they speak, and not simply exchange information with speakers of the target language. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) stated that “the process of identity construction does not reside within the individual but in intersubjective relations” (p. 608).

Scholars agree creating a positive sense of identity is a key goal. Positive identities are made up of those aspects of self-concept, self-esteem, and self-belief, which help a child feel a sense of both individuality and belonging in their social world, achieve emotional well-being, and develop concepts, knowledge, and abilities that are acceptable for one's culture. According to Harkness and Super (1977), people’s identities are shaped by the local environment, by the local values, and by the unique developmental riches that they inhabit. Identities are shaped by people’s daily lives, including their experiences at home, with friends, in school, and so on (Bronfenbrenner, 1978).

García’s definition of Translanguaging is linked to the meaning of identity; both identity and Translanguaging refer to the individuals’ perception of their world and how they relate to it according to time and space. Translanguaging, as described by Baker (2011), is the process of “making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages. Similarly, Wei (2011) stated that Translanguaging “creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment” (p. 1223).

Translanguaging considers the multiple identities and languages of students by creating a space where values, culture, language, and students’ own history can be expressed (Swain, 2006; Wei, 2011). Wei (2011) described how the translanguaging space “is not a space where different identities, values and practices simply co-exist, but combine together to generate new identities, values and practices” (p. 1223). Wei expressed that Translanguaging is transformative, and it creates a space for multilingual speakers’ social skills, beliefs, and ideologies by transforming their knowledge and experiences and giving them a new identity. According to Eller and Nieto (2021), promoting the idiolects of bilinguals can help them create positive identities.

This research paper draws upon Translanguaging theory in order to explore how students develop positive identities in the language classroom through this methodology. As opposed to traditional views of bilingualism that saw students’ language systems as “two solitudes” (Cummins, 2008), Translanguaging states that languages are interlaced rather than separated or detached (García, 2009). Translanguaging refers to the dynamic process of strategically and creatively selecting different linguistic features from *one* unitary, complex linguistic repertoire depending on the communicative need, the context, and the speakers (García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011).

Peirce (1995) claimed that “when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p.18). Thus, language learners are constructing their identities.

Through this framing, this particular piece examines the role of Translanguaging in developing positive identities in a Spanish language classroom. It also explores the benefits and challenges of using students’ full linguistic repertoires in the language classroom and the students’ and teachers’ attitudes toward the Translanguaging pedagogy.

Methods

Type of Study

A descriptive case study was implemented to answer the research questions. According to Yin (2018), case studies aid in understanding complex issues, and they can broaden knowledge of what has already been discovered through prior research by studying real-life scenarios and by utilizing a variety of sources to gather evidence. Case studies “provide a rich picture of what is happening” (Frechtling, 2002, p. 61).

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at an elite private school in Asunción where Spanish is taught as a second language to international students. This research included students from the SSL program from three different classes, which were different levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced classes). The study also included the teachers from the SSL program. There were four teachers in total, three students in the beginner class, seven students in the intermediate class, and five in the advanced class. All of the students are international, and they all come from different countries, such as the United States, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Germany, and Korea, but all of them mastered the English language. The SSL class is taught through a Translanguaging methodology. Therefore, both students and teachers have experience with this practice.

The sample for the students’ focus group and teachers’ interviews was chosen by applying the purposeful sampling technique. The researcher asked students with previous experience with Translanguaging to be part of the focus group, which resulted in two students from each class participating. Correspondingly, the four teachers from the SSL program were asked to be part of an interview. For the survey, the researcher used the population sampling technique, which included all the students from the SSL program. In this way, it was possible to get deep insights into the phenomenon of interest.

Data Collection

An online survey, interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group were chosen as the main tools for collecting data. First, an online survey was conducted with students from the SSL program at a private school in Asunción. One of the teachers from the department posted the survey as an assignment on the Spanish program’s Google Classroom so that students had access to it and participated if they wanted to. Seventeen students participated in the survey. The survey was

adapted from Agudo's (2012) study (see Appendix A) and consisted of ten questions. It is worth mentioning that surveys are good for gathering descriptive data and can cover different topics (Frechtling, 2002).

Subsequently, three different classes from this program were observed. Classes were observed from August to November of 2022. Each class was observed six times for forty-five minutes. For the observational instrument, the Lodico et al. (2010) template (see Appendix B) was used. The observations were useful to better understand the context. According to Frechtling (2002), observations are a good tool to provide direct information about the behavior of individuals in their natural settings.

Building on the observations' results, the four teachers from the SSL program were interviewed. The interview aimed to reveal teachers' attitudes toward the Translanguaging pedagogy and students' responses to this methodology, show how often and when teachers and students use English in the classroom, and uncover the benefits and drawbacks of using the dominant language. Interviews are useful when measuring attitudes, and they are crucial for exploration and confirmation (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Furthermore, interviews are targeted since they "focus directly on case study topics" (Yin, 2018, p. 157). The teachers were interviewed individually in an office from the Spanish department before their classes started. Participation was voluntary. Each interview lasted about 10 to 15 minutes, and Google Docs was used to take notes. Note-taking helped ensure the validity of the answers. An interview guide adapted from Agudo's (2012) study was used (see Appendix C).

Furthermore, a focus group with students was conducted to better understand their points of view on the subject matter. The topics covered included the importance of Spanish, their perceptions about the use of the dominant language in the classroom, and the benefits that it brings when learning a second language. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), focus groups provide insight into participants' internal thoughts, and they allow probing. Two students from each level were included in the focus group. The interview lasted 15 minutes. The questions from the survey were covered (see Appendix D) in order to get a more precise idea about participants' perceptions of the subject matter.

Data Analysis

A preliminary exploratory analysis was conducted in order to explore the information collected through the survey, the interviews, the observations, and a focus group. The process of data analysis included five steps, as suggested by Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003), and the strategy chosen relied on theoretical propositions by Yin (2018).

First of all, impressions about the data were written down utilizing Google Docs' comments. This online word processor was useful for keeping thoughts organized. Secondly, the data related to each research question was placed together, and any notes from the observations that were irrelevant to the research questions were set apart. Later, the information was coded by using the QDA Miner software (as suggested by Johnson & Christensen, 2019), which helped categorize different themes in an organized manner by following the principles of thematic analysis. This analysis is systematic. It analyzes qualitative data and finds commonalities across data sets in order to help the researcher find collective and shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Furthermore, Microsoft Excel was used to represent the data graphically through graphs and tables. Finally, from the codes and themes, a narrative description was created.

Results

The analysis of the data resulted in four main themes: students' motivation toward learning Spanish; attitudes toward Translanguaging, including students' and teachers' attitudes; reasons for using Translanguaging, which includes four sub-themes: vocabulary understanding, concept clarification, Grammar explanation, and Translanguaging and positive identities; and dominant language overuse.

Students' Motivation Toward Learning Spanish

The results obtained from the analysis indicate that most of the students have a high level of motivation toward Spanish language learning. The results obtained from the survey are supported by teachers' interviews as well as the students' focus group.

During the focus group and the interviews, students as well as teachers mentioned the importance of learning a second language. Student 1 stated, "*El español es muy importante para mí porque vivo en Paraguay. Es importante aprender la nueva lengua porque la lengua es común y puedo interact con las personas a través de ella.*"¹ Likewise, Student 2 remarked, "Really important. Spanish is important for job opportunities. It also allows you to travel around the world." This theme also came up in the interviews with teachers, and they acknowledge that most students are highly motivated; however, a teacher mentioned that some students are not. Teacher 1 mentioned,

*La mayoría de los alumnos están motivados a aprender español porque desean poder comunicarse con otros alumnos en dicho idioma. Pero otros no. ¿Para qué quisieran aprender a hablar bien español si ellos se van mudando y mudando? Sus padres van a otro país, y ellos van detrás. Los alumnos quedan aquí solamente por un periodo de tiempo.*²

Students' and Teachers' Attitudes Toward Translanguaging

The results reveal that students and teachers hold a range of different opinions on the use of Translanguaging in the SSL classroom. Both students and teachers recognize the benefits of Translanguaging; nonetheless, they also acknowledge that English should have limited use.

During the focus group interview, students also presented their opinions about how much English should be used in the classroom. They stated that the use of the dominant language should be limited. Student 5 mentioned,

No debemos usar tanto inglés en la clase. Cuando yo fui a Italia a través de un programa de intercambio unos años atrás, los profes no me permitían usar nada de inglés, entonces yo me sentía forzado a aprender italiano. Inglés no se hablaba en la escuela y por eso yo aprendí rápido el italiano. Aprendí italiano en tres meses. Pienso que los profesores no

¹ Spanish is very important to me because I live in Paraguay. It is important to learn the new language because the language is common and I can interact with people through it.

² Most of the students are motivated to learn Spanish because they want to be able to communicate with other students in that language. But others are not. Why would they want to learn to speak Spanish well if they keep moving and moving? Their parents go to another country, and students go after them. Students stay here just for a period of time.

*deben usar inglés. Los alumnos sí pueden hacerlo. Da igual que los alumnos usen inglés o español, pero el profesor debe usar español y rarely inglés.*³

In the interview, teachers exposed how often they and their students use Spanish and English in the classroom, depending on students' levels of Spanish. They mentioned some of the benefits of using the dominant language, such as the increase in the levels of participation, and some drawbacks, such as the lack of language authenticity. Teacher 1 mentioned,

*Nosotros intentamos que sea un 80-20%. Los profesores hablamos español 80% del tiempo y hablamos inglés un 20%. Con niveles avanzados, llegamos a hablar hasta 90% español. El libro que utilizamos tiene inglés en todos los niveles, pero cuanto más bajo el nivel del libro, tiene más inglés. En cuanto a los alumnos, si son principiantes, sería un 30% del tiempo hablando español, y 70% hablando inglés. Niveles más avanzados, hablamos 80% inglés. Depende del nivel lingüístico.*⁴

Later, teachers were asked their perceptions about using English in the SSL classroom.

Teacher 1 mentioned, *“Pienso que el inglés es disruptivo para los alumnos que ya poseen un nivel avanzado, pero ayuda a los de nivel principiante e intermedio a expresar sus ideas cuando se sienten frustrados. Hay veces que los alumnos necesitan expresar algún problema en clase, y los que recién están empezando no tienen vocabulario o herramientas suficientes para decirlo en español.”*⁵

Teacher 3 stated, *“Si los chicos siguen rodeados del inglés, el aprendizaje no es auténtico. Necesitamos autenticidad del lenguaje. Pero el material que utilizamos contiene mucho inglés, por lo que es complicado lograr esto.”*⁶

Teacher 4 mentioned,

*Usar ambos idiomas en clase ayuda a que los chicos participen. Enseño en un instituto donde no se permite utilizar el idioma nativo, y los alumnos tienen miedo de hablar. A veces son muy callados y no participan. En cambio, noto que durante el recreo hablan mucho con sus compañeros ya que usan español. Hablo de los principiantes. Aquí en cambio, la participación es bastante alta durante las clases. Los alumnos no tienen vergüenza.*⁷

Teachers and students exposed different opinions about the use of Translanguaging. Some teachers stated that it hinders the authenticity of second language learning, and that they, as well as students, might overuse Spanish in some situations. Nonetheless, teachers also acknowledged the advantages of Translanguaging when learning a second language and in creating a positive environment. Meanwhile, students also recognized the importance of their dominant language, English, in learning Spanish. However, they stated that the use of English should be limited; otherwise, it can hinder Spanish language learning.

³ We shouldn't use English a lot in the classroom. When I went to Italy through an exchange program some years ago, teachers would not allow me to use English at all, so I felt forced to learn Italian. English was not spoken at school and for this reason, I learned Italian fast. I learned Italian in 3 months. I think that teachers should not use English. Students can do it. It does not matter if the students use English or Spanish, but the teacher should use Spanish, and rarely use English.

⁴ We try to make it 80-20%. Teachers speak Spanish 80% of the time, and we speak English 20% of it. With advanced levels, we speak up to 90% Spanish. The book we use has English at all levels, but the lower the level of the book, the more English it has. As for the students, if they are beginners, it would be 30% of the time speaking Spanish and 70% English. More advanced levels, 80% English. It depends on the language level.

⁵ I think English is disruptive for students who are already advanced, but it helps beginner and intermediate students to express their ideas when they are frustrated. There are times when students need to express a problem in class, and those who are just beginning do not have enough vocabulary or tools to say it in Spanish.

⁶ If children continue to be surrounded by English, learning is not authentic. We need the authenticity of the language, but the material we use contains a lot of English, so it is difficult to achieve this.

⁷ Using both languages in class helps students participate. I teach in an institute where the native language is not allowed to be used, and the students are afraid to speak. Sometimes they are very quiet and do not participate. Instead, I notice that during recess they talk a lot with their classmates since they use Spanish. I am talking about beginners. Here, on the other hand, participation is quite high during classes. The students are not ashamed.

Reasons for Using Translanguaging

Different reasons for applying Translanguaging in the classroom emerged when analyzing the data. The most common reasons for using English in the classroom were understanding vocabulary, clarifying difficult concepts, explaining grammar points, and expressing oneself.

Vocabulary Understanding

During the classroom observation, Translanguaging was implemented in different stages of the class to clarify new words to students. For instance, before students entered the classroom, the teachers from the SSL classroom wrote *la Palabra del Día*⁸ on the board. It included a new word to be learned in Spanish, the word category in parentheses, the English translation, an example of a sentence in Spanish that contained the word, and the English translation of the sentence.

Furthermore, every time students had a test, they were given a *Vale de Traducción*, which is like a translation voucher they can use if they did not understand a word from the exam and needed the English translation. Having only one voucher prevents students from abusing the use of the English language.

During the focus group, students also mentioned that Translanguaging helps them with new vocabulary. Student 3 said, “English helps me a lot, especially when I don’t understand some words in Spanish.” Likewise, Student 4 discussed, “*Necesitamos inglés para los significados de las palabras. El inglés es importante para aprender a hablar español y para entender las palabras nuevas.*”⁹

While students were doing a reading exercise in their book, Student 1 asked Teacher 1, “¿Qué significa la palabra *atún*?”¹⁰ Teacher 1 answers, “*Decí la palabra atún muchas veces y vas a escuchar la palabra en inglés.*”¹¹ Student 1 said, “Atún atún atún atún... Oh! I got it! It’s tuna!”

Concept Clarification

Translanguaging is also used for concept clarification; for instance, for clarifying idiomatic expressions. While reading a grammar example, Student 3 stated, “¿Qué significa *vale la pena*?”¹² I am familiar with the words *vale* and *pena*, but it just doesn’t make sense to me.” Teacher 1 explained, “to be worth it.” Student 3 said, “Oh! I see.” Likewise, when students were writing an essay, Student 5 asked Teacher 1, “Profe, ¿Cómo se dice ‘do more harm than good?’”¹³ Teacher 1 states, “*Podrías decir hace más daño que bien.*”¹⁴

During the interviews, teachers expressed how Translanguaging aids in clarifying concepts. Teacher 4 exposed,

También utilizamos el español para aclarar conceptos, como expresiones que aquí usamos y que para ellos son desconocidas. Expresiones idiomáticas, por ejemplo. Intentamos encontrar el equivalente en inglés para que a ellos les sea más fácil entender.

⁸ The Word of the Day

⁹ We need English for the meanings of the words. English is important to learn to speak Spanish and to understand new words.

¹⁰ What does the word *atún* mean?

¹¹ Say the word *atún* many times and you are going to hear the word in English.

¹² What does *vale la pena* mean?

¹³ Teacher, how do you say *do more hard than good*?

¹⁴ You could say *hace más daño que bien*.

*También para dar instrucciones de los diferentes ejercicios que aparecen en los exámenes, así nos aseguramos de que ellos comprendan lo que deben hacer.*¹⁵

Grammar Explanation

While learning a new grammar lesson, teachers and students compared Spanish and English grammar, and used both languages. The Spanish book used in the SSL program contained grammar explanations in English with examples in Spanish and their translations to English. While learning a lesson on *Nouns and Definite Articles*, Teacher 2 remarked, “*Recuerden que en español decimos los animales, we don’t say just animals like in English. Usamos el definite article.*”¹⁶ Later, Teacher 2 asked Student 4 to give an example of a sentence with a definitive article. Student 4 replied, “*Vegetales son buenos para la salud.*”¹⁷ Teacher 2 asked, “*Vegetales? Something is missing.*” Student 4 stated, “*Los vegetales.*” After that, they started to talk about likes and dislikes, and Teacher 2 stated, “*Remember not to say yo gusto, like the English phrase I like, instead we say me gusta.*” Finally, in another lesson, students were learning the use of the preposition *de*, and Teacher 3 stated, “*Recuerden que en español decimos, por ejemplo, libro de fantasía, which is fantasy book in English. Le agregamos de.*”¹⁸ Student 4 replied, “*It makes sense, like King of English, right?*”

While being interviewed, teachers acknowledged that using both languages in the classroom was useful for learning grammar. Teacher 3 stated,

*Usar el español y el inglés juntos es útil al enseñar gramática. Comparamos bastante, por ejemplo, cuando practicamos géneros o pluralizamos. Algunos alumnos suelen olvidar usar femenino y masculino, o también usar adjetivos en plural. Y ahí es donde les recordamos que en inglés no se pluralizan los adjetivos, pero que en español sí.*¹⁹

Translanguaging and Positive Identities

Students and teachers exposed different factors related to students’ positive identities when they explained the benefits of using English in class.

During the focus group interview, Student 6 expressed, “*I like speaking English in class. I don’t want to lose my accent. It’s my language, you know... It’s like the whole of who I am.*” Likewise, Student 4 stated, “*There are things that just don’t make sense in Spanish, like phrases my mom says or some stories from the past.*”

In the interview, Teacher 4 stated, “*Ellos usan inglés cuando están emocionados o frustrados. Cuando sienten emociones fuertes.*”²⁰

Teacher 3 remarks,

Cuando hablan en inglés se sienten cómodos. Hay cosas que no pueden decir aún en español o expresarlas de la manera que ellos quieren. Al hablar inglés, pierden la

¹⁵ We also use Spanish to clarify concepts, such as expressions that we use here and that are unknown to them. Idioms, for example. We try to find the equivalent in English to make it easier for them to understand. Also to give instructions for the different exercises that appear in the exams, so we make sure that they understand what they have to do.

¹⁶ Remember that in Spanish we say *los animales*, we don’t say just *animals* like in English. We use the definite article.

¹⁷ Vegetables are good for health.

¹⁸ Remember that in Spanish we say, for example, *libro de fantasía*, which is *fantasy book* in English. We add *de*.

¹⁹ Using Spanish and English together is useful when teaching Grammar. We compare a lot, for example, when we practice genres or pluralize. Some students tend to forget to use feminine and masculine, or also use plural adjectives. And that is when we remind them that in English adjectives are not pluralized, but in Spanish they are.

²⁰ They use English when they are excited or frustrated. When they feel strong emotions.

*vergüenza. Usar ambos idiomas realmente en clase genera una alta participación de parte de los alumnos.*²¹

As mentioned before, three of the students who completed the online survey chose the option *other* when they were asked why they thought English was necessary in class. One of them specified, “to express myself,” another one explained, “to fully explain what I want to say,” and the third student mentioned, “when I can’t find the exact words I wanna use.”

As it can be seen, Translanguaging plays a crucial role in different aspects of students’ identities. This practice helps students express themselves, combat nervousness, share their experience, and communicate their feelings.

Dominant Language Overuse

As stated before, Translanguaging brings with it several advantages in the classroom; however, it is important to mention that there is also a main challenge: dominant language overuse.

In the interview, Teacher 1 stated, “*Se comportan algo cómodos. Empiezan diciendo una o dos palabras en inglés y a veces ya no sueltan. Continúan en inglés por más que podrían expresarlo en español, por su nivel.*”²²

Teacher 2 affirmed, “*Incluso es complicado para nosotros. Por ejemplo, un alumno pregunta algo en inglés, y por inercia nosotros, los profes, también respondemos en inglés.*”²³

Teacher 3 mentioned, “*A veces es confuso. Hace perder el idioma que estás hablando. De repente, un chico habla en inglés y esto queda enganchado, y todos terminamos hablando inglés por momentos.*”²⁴

Teacher 1 mentioned, “*También considero negativo para los de niveles más avanzados. Ellos pueden expresarse en español, pero cuando se comunican con los chicos de niveles inferiores, optan por usar en inglés para que ellos les entiendan.*”²⁵

In short, the main challenge in implementing Translanguaging is dominant language overuse. Teachers mentioned that sometimes it is difficult to control students’ dominant language use and that students use it even when they can express what they want to say in the second language, Spanish. Furthermore, teachers mentioned this excessive use of the dominant language could also be confusing for themselves, and they might end up using the dominant language more than needed.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of Translanguaging in the development of students’ positive identities when learning a second language. In this section, the findings discovered by analyzing the data are discussed in relation to the literature. The results have

²¹ When they speak English, they feel comfortable. There are things that they cannot yet say in Spanish or express in the way they want. By speaking English, they lose their shame. Using both languages in class actually generates a high participation from the students.

²² They behave somewhat comfortable. They start by saying one or two words in English and sometimes they don’t let go. They continue in English even though they could express it in Spanish, due to their level.

²³ It is even complicated for us. For example, a student asks something in English, and by inertia we, the teachers, also answer in English.

²⁴ Sometimes it is confusing. It makes you lose the language you are speaking. All of a sudden, a guy speaks English and this is hooked, and we all end up speaking English at times.

²⁵ I also consider the use of English negative for those of more advanced levels. They can express themselves in Spanish, but when they communicate with the children of lower levels, they choose to use English so that they understand them.

been examined in order to determine whether the issues raised in the existing literature match those identified in this study.

The literature presents different situations in which L1 might be useful in the language classroom, which also came up in this study. Swain and colleagues (1990) explained that L1 promotes understanding among students and improves grammar comprehension and communication. As Medgyes (1994) stated, L1 is useful when providing clarification, explaining grammar, and making a contrast between L1 and L2. Baker and Wright (2017) also exposed that L1 improves comprehension and understanding. Agudo (2012) mentioned that L1 is beneficial for improving comprehension, understanding vocabulary, and clarifying abstract concepts. In his study, Agudo discovered that 74.42% of the participants believed that L1 was useful for vocabulary understanding, followed by the clarification of difficult concepts or ideas (53.49%). In this study, 92.6% of the participants considered English to be useful for comprehending new vocabulary, and 70.4% stated that the dominant language was useful for clarifying concepts and explaining grammar.

Nonetheless, another reason for implementing Translanguaging that was revealed in this study was to promote positive identities. Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002) stated that L1 use created a relaxing and emotionally comfortable language classroom. Likewise, Collier and Thomas (2004) found out that bilingualism provoked greater emotional and behavioral wellness. According to other studies, the loss of the mother tongue was associated with lower levels of motivation, self-esteem, and general language abilities (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). Agudo (2012) explained that teachers could use students' L1 to reduce negative emotions and nervousness and to increase confidence and enjoyment. In this study, both students and teachers mentioned aspects that deal with identity when explaining why Translanguaging is beneficial in the class. These factors included self-expression, personal feelings, and life experiences. This study revealed that students use Translanguaging to fully express themselves, to tell their stories, and to show strong emotions. As Wei (2011) stated, Translanguaging provides a space that brings together different dimensions of individuals' experiences, personal history, and environment.

Regarding students' and teachers' attitudes toward Translanguaging, the literature as well as this study revealed there are different points of view. Wang (2019) explained that some teachers supported Translanguaging, but others did not see the significance of implementing it. Fang and Liu (2020) showed that teachers acknowledge the importance of Translanguaging for content learning. Moody et al. (2019) indicated that students agreed that Translanguaging should be used in education since it helps them learn the L2. In his study, Agudo (2012) showed that 53.49% of the participants thought that L1 should be used no more than 20% of the time in class. In this study, the majority of the participants (36%) believed that 20 to 40% of English should be used in the class, and 32% thought that it should only be used 10 to 20% of the time. Teachers and students admitted that Translanguaging has its benefits; however, they also acknowledged that the use of the dominant language should be controlled, otherwise, Translanguaging could be negative for students' learning progress.

According to the literature, one of the biggest challenges in implementing Translanguaging pedagogies is students' overuse of the dominant language. Corder (1983) stated that learners should use L1 when they feel it will be helpful; otherwise, the L1 might result in overuse. Likewise, Fang and Liu (2020) mentioned one of the main reasons why some teachers do not adopt Translanguaging is because they are concerned about students' excessive use of L1. Similarly, in this study, it was revealed that the main drawback of Translanguaging is that students overuse their

dominant language. However, it has also been discovered that not only students but also teachers might overuse the dominant language due to the environment's influence.

The results from this study show that the implementation of Translanguaging has various advantages on students' second language learning, including the creation of positive identities in the language classroom. Despite the main challenge—*overuse of the dominant language*—teachers and students perceive Translanguaging as a useful pedagogy for learning a second language. Moreover, the findings of this study share plenty of similarities with the existing literature. Nonetheless, the results of this study show that Translanguaging can also cause teachers' overuse of the dominant language, and factors related to identity were exposed by students when describing the benefits of a Translanguaging pedagogy.

Limitations

This study presented some limitations related to sample size, generalizability, length of time, and language studied. Firstly, the researcher analyzed a small sample of students from one school in Asunción. Therefore, the results are not generalizable.

Although the questionnaire and the interview helped have less biased responses by asking students to explain their perceptions on certain issues through open-ended questions, another possible weakness was the response/participant's bias. This can lead students to respond inaccurately or falsely to questions. Students and teachers might respond according to what they think the researcher wants to hear (Bell, 2005).

Moreover, the amount of time designated to classroom observations was relatively short. This makes it difficult to evaluate students' progress in second language learning through a Translanguaging methodology. Classes were not observed in different periods of the academic year but in three months straight.

Another limitation would be the language studied. This study focused only on Spanish and English. However, there are other schools that have German or French as their second language. Furthermore, many students in the countryside have Guarani as their first language and Spanish as their second.

The participants of this study were protected in different ways. First of all, participation was voluntary for both students and teachers. Moreover, participants were informed about what the research project was about before deciding whether or not to participate. Furthermore, students and teachers were previously informed about class observations. Participants' identity was protected in different ways. For example, Students and teachers were protected by changing their names to numbers (e.g., Student 1). Lastly, surveys were anonymous.

Implications

The results of this study provide insight into the benefits of the use of Translanguaging in the classroom, the role that it plays in the creation of positive identities, its main challenges, and students' and teachers' perceptions of this practice. Currently, there is little research on Translanguaging in Paraguay. The findings of this research can be useful to identify some of the main issues regarding this methodology. Educators can benefit from this study by learning students' and other teachers' points of view on the implementation of Translanguaging in the second

language classroom as well as its main benefits for second language learning success and some possible challenges.

As mentioned before, this study presents limitations in the sample size, generalizability, and language studied. Future research could investigate multiple educational settings where Translanguaging is used in order to generalize these results to the greater student population. Furthermore, the length of time established for classroom observations was relatively short to assess students' progress in second language learning when learning through Translanguaging. Therefore, another recommendation for future research would be to observe classes during different periods throughout the academic year. Moreover, this study investigated the use of Translanguaging between Spanish and English only. Future studies could investigate the Translanguaging between Spanish and Guarani or other languages, such as French or German, since there are bilingual schools in Paraguay that teach these languages. A recommendation for language teachers would be to further explore the use of Translanguaging pedagogies in the classroom, and strategies to apply this methodology in their classes. Finally, language teachers could consider using students' dominant language to a limited extent in order to promote positive identities to enhance second language learning when dealing with new vocabulary, grammar, and concept clarification.

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Appendix A

Survey

This survey was adapted from Agudo's (2012) study.

Translanguaging between English and Spanish and Positive Identities in the Spanish as a Second Language Classroom at a Private School in Asunción

¡Hola!

This survey aims to discover students' attitudes toward Translanguaging practices in the classroom. Since you are taught through this methodology, I would really appreciate your help by answering this survey. It should not take more than 3 minutes, and your responses will be completely anonymous so please feel free to provide honest feedback.

¡Gracias por tu ayuda!

1. What gender do you identify most with?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say

2. Spanish Level
 - Beginner
 - Intermediate
 - Advanced

3. How important is it for you to know Spanish?
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Not important
 - Not at all important

4. Do you think you learn Spanish faster with the help of English?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

5. Do you think you will learn Spanish better if your teacher uses only Spanish in the classroom?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

6. Do you think using English in the classroom helps you learn Spanish?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

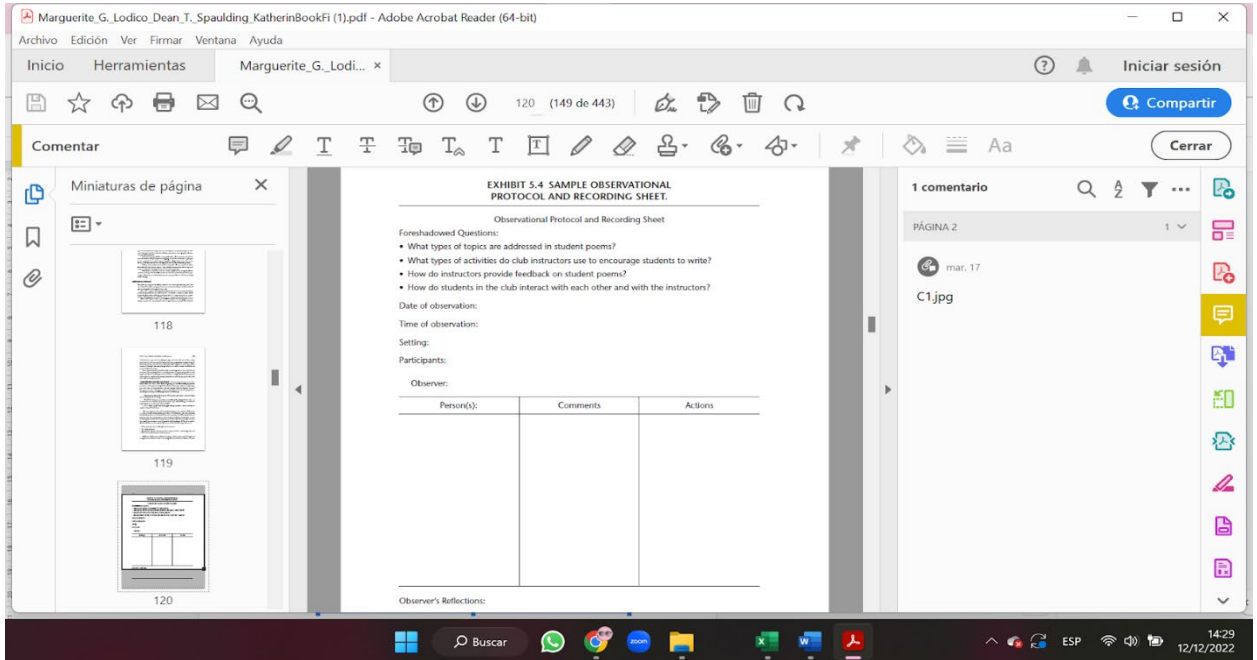
7. How does English help you learn Spanish?

8. How often do you think English should be used in the classroom?
 Always
 Often
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 Never
9. What percentage of the time do you think English should be used in the class?
 Never
 10%- 20%
 20%- 40%
 40%-60%
 60%-80%
10. When do you think your native language is necessary in the class?
 To help define new vocabulary
 To practice the use of some phrases and expressions
 To explain complex Grammar points
 To explain difficult concepts or ideas
 To give instructions
 To give suggestions on how to learn more effectively
 Other
- If any other please specify

Appendix B

Observational Instrument

For the observational instrument, I used Lodico's (2020) template presented in his book *Methods in Educational Research*.



Date of observation:

Time of observation:

Setting:

Participants:

Observer:

Person(s):	Comments	Actions

Observer's Reflections:

(Lodico, 2010, p. 120)

Appendix C

Interview Guide

This Interview guide was adapted from Agudo's (2012) study:

1. How often do you use English in the classroom?
2. In which situations do you use English?
3. Do you think your students benefit from using English in the class? If so, how?
4. What are students' attitudes toward using English in the class?
5. Are there any disadvantages in using English in the class? If so, which ones?
6. Would you rather use a monolingual approach rather than Translanguaging? Why?
7. What are some challenges about using Translanguaging in the class? How do you deal with them?

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

- How important is it for you to learn Spanish?
- Do you think you learn Spanish faster with the help of English?
- How does English help you learn Spanish?
- Do you think you will learn Spanish better if your teacher uses only Spanish in the classroom?
- How often do you think English should be used in the classroom?
- When do you think English is necessary in the class?