



IMPLEMENTING TRANSLANGUAGING IN BI/MULTILINGUAL LITERACY CLASSROOMS: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND READING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT: *Literacy classrooms often focus on a single language, although they may pertain to school contexts where students speak two or more languages. Adopting a monolingual approach prevents learners from using all their meaning-making tools and engaging with the content to be taught (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). Translanguaging is the term used to describe the practices that arise when people use their complete linguistic repertoire to meet their communication objectives (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). Following this perspective, in a bilingual/multilingual classroom, students develop their skills in literacy processes using all the languages they master. Considering it is a relatively abstract concept, teachers may need help to visualize the implementation of translanguaging practices in reading classes. This study aimed to provide insights to teachers based on a realist review of articles reporting teaching experiences and reading research, which offer pedagogical strategies for implementing translanguaging in bilingual/multilingual classrooms. The data collection method used in this study relied on secondary sources involving bibliographical research. The sample had ten articles, most published in journals specialized in sharing tips and reports on teaching experiences. The pedagogical strategies identified concerned the following topics: teacher-student interaction, interaction among students, materials and multimodality, vocabulary, syntax, steps in a reading class, critical reading, and storytelling. This work sought to contribute to teachers' development in teaching reading, considering all the linguistic resources of their students.*

KEYWORDS: *translanguaging; reading; literacy.*

RESUMO: *As salas de aula de alfabetização concentram-se frequentemente numa única língua, embora possam pertencer a contextos escolares onde os alunos falam duas ou mais línguas. A adoção de uma abordagem monolíngue impede que os alunos utilizem todas as suas ferramentas de construção de significado e se envolvam com o conteúdo ensinado (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). Translinguagem é o termo usado para descrever as práticas que surgem quando as pessoas utilizam todo o seu repertório linguístico para atingir seus objetivos de comunicação (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). Nessa perspectiva, em uma sala de aula bilíngue/multilíngue, os alunos desenvolvem suas habilidades nos processos de alfabetização utilizando todos os idiomas que dominam. Tratando-se de um conceito relativamente abstrato, os professores podem precisar de ajuda para visualizar a implementação de práticas de translinguagem nas aulas de leitura. Este estudo buscou fornecer percepções aos professores baseadas numa revisão realista de artigos relatando experiências de ensino e pesquisas em leitura, que oferecem estratégias pedagógicas para implementar a translinguagem em salas de aula bilíngues/multilíngues. O método de coleta de dados utilizado contou com fontes secundárias, envolvendo pesquisa bibliográfica. A amostra contou com dez artigos, a maioria publicados em periódicos especializados em compartilhar dicas e relatos de experiências docentes. As estratégias pedagógicas identificadas trataram dos seguintes temas: interação professor-aluno, interação entre alunos, materiais e multimodalidade, vocabulário, sintaxe, etapas de uma aula de leitura, leitura crítica e contação de histórias. Este trabalho buscou contribuir para o desenvolvimento dos professores no ensino da leitura, considerando todos os recursos linguísticos de seus alunos.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *translinguagem; leitura; alfabetização e letramento.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the latter part of the 20th century, there has been a noticeable emergence of new patterns in global activity marked by the increased movement of individuals, capital goods, and ideas (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). With more and more people moving from one country to another to cater to their interests, there is an increasing need to support the educational needs of bilinguals and multilinguals from diverse language backgrounds. Countries like the United States and Canada, which receive several immigrants from various places, are better prepared to deal with linguistic diversity in the classroom. Contrastingly, there is little effort to integrate bilingual and multilingual immigrant children into educational settings in Brazil, even though it had 122.900 immigrant students enrolled in elementary school in 2020 (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2021).

In Brazil, as in many other places, language and literacy teaching curricula are traditionally designed with an exclusive focus on a single language despite being applied in contexts in which the use of two or more languages is the norm. By adopting a monolingual approach, it is possible to focus on a specific target language, but this limits students from using their entire linguistic repertoires to assign meaning and fully engage with the content being taught (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). A different approach to teaching involves using more inclusive literacy practices through translanguaging, in which speakers create and use original and complex interrelated discursive methods that are part of their meaning-making repertoire (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014).

Following a translanguaging perspective, students develop their skills in literacy processes using all the languages they master. In a bilingual/multilingual classroom, when teachers allow multilingual students to use all the meaning-making tools they have available, "...they demonstrate expanded vocabularies, better inference-making skills, more sophisticated metalinguistic and meta-semantic awareness, improved reading comprehension, increased literacy engagement, and increased fluency across languages" (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023, p. 174). Students may engage in translanguaging naturally to communicate in the classroom; however, effective use of a translanguaging approach requires teachers need to establish an official action plan to implement an official translanguaging pedagogy (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). With that in mind, this study aims to review articles about teaching tips and reading research concerning translanguaging practices in literacy classrooms to offer insights to teachers in bi/multilingual environments.

1 METHOD

The data collection method used in this study relied on secondary sources involving bibliographical research (GIL, 2017). We conducted a realist review to understand "...heterogeneous evidence about complex interventions applied in different contexts"

(PARÉ; KITSIOU, 2017, p. 167) and to inform teachers about what pedagogical practices work, for whom, and under what circumstances. In this type of review, researchers attempt to interpret findings from quantitative or qualitative studies. After applying the descriptors 'reading' and 'translanguaging' between inverted commas with the Boolean operator *AND* for all fields on the platform *Periódicos da Capes*, the search returned 134 results. The next step was to refine the findings, in which only articles published between 2021 and 2023 in peer-reviewed journals were selected, resulting in 56 studies. In a preliminary analysis of the abstracts, we included only studies related to reading in the classroom, leaving a sample of 26 articles. Finally, we skimmed through the texts and excluded those that focused on cultural, ethnic, and racial issues, studies about specific materials and teacher training, and research on writing and online reading; articles reporting on studies investigating typologically-distant languages were also excluded. As a result, the final sample comprised ten articles containing practical suggestions for reading teachers when implementing translanguaging practices. Next, we present an overview of the articles and pedagogical insights for reading teachers grouped according to their type or focus.

2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the ten articles, seven of them recounted teachers' practice and experience implementing translanguaging in bi/multilingual classrooms (DOMKE; CURIEL, 2021; DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022; KELLY, 2022; MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021; PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022; SONG; HOWARD; OLAZABAL-ARIAS, 2022; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Also, there was one opinion paper (SOUTO-MANNING; MARTELL; PÉREZ; PIÓN, 2021), one exploratory study (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021), and one ethnographic study (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). Regarding the journals that published the studies, *The Reading Teacher* published seven articles, and the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *Education Sciences*, and *TESOL Quarterly* each published one article. Nearly all the practice-based and teaching tips articles were published in *The Reading Teacher*. Nevertheless, all the texts in the sample provided insightful suggestions for implementing translanguaging practices in the literacy classroom. The practices identified have been grouped and will be presented in the following order: (1) teacher-students and interaction among students, (2) materials – texts, books, posters, and artwork – and multimodality, (3) vocabulary, (4) syntax, (5) parts of a reading lesson, (6) critical reading, and (7) read-aloud storytelling.

Concerning (1) **teacher-students and interaction among students**, one of the crucial decisions teachers need to make regarding their classroom practices is how they will interact with students and foster student interaction. An effective technique that educators can employ to enhance comprehension is the use of translation (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021), as it "facilitates communicative processes such as delivering

instructions, checking for understanding, and providing feedback" (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023, p. 177). Furthermore, teachers can use translation to meet the specific needs of students, considering their age and proficiency level in the second language (L2); younger and less proficient students, for example, may initially rely more on their home language (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Besides oral instructions, teachers can utilize written code as a mediating tool by writing information on the board in students' languages and incorporating multimodal resources like gestures and images (DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Moreover, employing diverse vocabulary and cognates in students' languages can support their familiarity with the concepts taught (SOUTO-MANNING; MARTELL; PÉREZ; PIÓN, 2021; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023).

Modeling the activity or selecting a group of students to demonstrate the procedures to others is another technique that teachers may employ (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Educators must illustrate how students can utilize translanguaging during their interactions, allowing them to share their ideas in any language (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Teachers can do this by posing questions in one language and accepting answers in any language the students speak, followed by providing the equivalent in the language of instruction (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). However, this practice can be challenging for teachers unfamiliar with all the codes that are part of students' linguistic repertoires. One potential solution for this issue is to utilize technological tools like translation software available on smartphones and computers.

Regarding interaction among students, first and foremost, teachers must promote a safe space for discussion, reinforcing the golden rule: to treat others as you would like to be treated (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). Much like sociocultural theory, translanguaging pedagogies follow student-centered approaches in which "learning is a dialogically-based process occurring in the learners' zone of proximal development as a result of interaction and scaffolding mediated by adults or more capable peers (VYGOTSKY, 1978, *apud* WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023, p. 175). Thus, teachers should encourage students to collaborate in pairs or small groups. Pairing up techniques may involve putting together same-language peers who can discuss in their home language and respond to whole group discussions in the language of instruction (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). This way, "students focus on developing reading skills or learning in the content area through collaborative dialogue, working in multilingual writing groups, and working with multilingual reading partners (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023, p. 179).

Another technique for pairing up students would involve matching individuals with different language skills, such as pairing a student who excels in Portuguese but struggles with Spanish with a student who excels in Spanish but struggles with Portuguese (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). By working together, students can provide mutual assistance to complete assigned tasks, utilizing a computer with internet access to search

for images, perform language translations, and improve pronunciation (DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022, p. 681). This practice can foster learners' metalinguistic awareness since they compare languages, share ideas, and inquire about linguistic structures (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021).

Regarding (2) **reading materials and multimodality**, implementing translanguaging practices can involve creating a multilingual environment, encompassing texts, books, posters, and artwork displayed on the walls (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Teachers may provide passages in the language of instruction for discussion and analysis, allowing students to use their home language. Alternatively, teachers can select texts in multiple languages that cover the same content area (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Working with multilingual texts can also encourage learners to engage in translanguaging (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021; SOUTO-MANNING; MARTELL; PÉREZ; PIÓN, 2021; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023), enabling them to “validate information across languages to strengthen vocabulary and content knowledge but also interact with texts on a level that promotes deep thinking and response” (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023, p. 181). Also, teachers can curate a multilingual reading list for students to explore and share with their families to foster connection and engagement with the school (SONG; HOWARD; OLAZABAL-ARIAS, 2022).

Picture books hold significant value as multimodal materials to support bilingual and multilingual students' literacy and reading development of bilingual and multilingual students (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022; WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). When learners cannot yet decode, picture books can feature simple stories without any text, allowing teachers to explore the connection between oral language and literacy. These books can also capitalize on students' multimodal literacies, incorporating elements such as images, sounds, and tactile experiences (DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022), making them suitable for storytelling or read-aloud activities. Over time, teachers can introduce picture books with limited text can be introduced, containing words in both the language of instruction and students' home languages. Teachers can motivate students by encouraging them to describe the pictures and discuss the storyline (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023).

Dual-language or multilingual books refer to those that feature text in more than one specified language, such as Portuguese and Spanish (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022). Educators who embrace a translanguaging pedagogy recognize the value of these books as essential resources for fostering multicultural, multilingual, and biliteracy development (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022). They enhance content area knowledge and linguistic skills for bilingual learners across both languages (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Additionally, these books can stimulate critical thinking among multilingual students as they analyze how languages are represented (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022). Teachers should choose books that reflect the complexities of

bilingualism to “counteract the unrealistic, harmful, lingering expectations that people are truly bilingual when they have proficiency like a native speaker in two languages” (BAKER & WRIGHT, *apud* DOMKE; CUIEL, 2021, p. 453).

Posters and artwork displayed on the walls contribute to the enriching classroom environment. Teachers can create several multilingual teaching and learning aids, including word walls, sentence starters, lists of cognates, and text comparison guides (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). These resources aim to support multilingual vocabulary inquiry, provide insights into multilingual syntax and morphology, and offer assistance in multilingual writing (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Bilingual and multilingual students can engage with bilingual charts within the classroom, promoting metalinguistic awareness and fostering motivation to explore additional languages (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Furthermore, these materials can extend their impact beyond the classroom by being displayed on message boards and hallways (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022).

Bilinguals and multilinguals engaged in translanguaging use all the resources available in their meaning-making repertoire. Allowing students to create and use multimodal resources could facilitate the language learning and structure necessary to develop literacy skills. Teachers may propose that students build materials, from multilingual books to posters, using construction paper, glue, tape, markers, and other resources that stimulate their creativity (DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022). Furthermore, students need to use their knowledge of story structure, which fosters the development of literacy skills; they may create stories related to the content they are learning in the classes and use the vocabulary and content studied orally (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022). Another way to work with multimodality in the reading classroom is by using music. Teachers can choose songs either in students’ home language or in the language of instruction and ask students to translate them (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). It is also possible to use popular multilingual songs and ask students to translate part of the song into one of the languages used (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023).

As for the aspect of (3) **vocabulary**, good vocabulary knowledge is essential for reading comprehension. One way to increase the number of words students know is through having multilingual materials or translated books, charts, and signs in classrooms (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Also, vocabulary teaching can occur through interactive literacy experiences, in which learners are in a safe and supportive environment with plenty of reading materials and engaging discussions (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). Targeted vocabulary integration across multiple language modalities, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, over an extended period allows for a deeper understanding of word meanings and enhanced fluency (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021; MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). Students can work in pairs or small groups in interactive picture

labeling, where they ask each other questions about pictures and try to come up with an explanation in their preferred language (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021).

Teachers can also foster word-learning strategies to encourage students to infer the meanings of unknown words when reading independently (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). These strategies focus on etymology and morphology when teachers draw learners' attention to root words, affixes, and context clues, contributing to their metalinguistic knowledge (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021; PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). For this, it is possible to create interactive wall charts and activities that allow students to play with the language through word sorting and card games (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). Teachers can also help learners reflect on translanguaging inside the words, which happens when bilinguals mix their languages to create new uses, such as '*mopear*' – the verb 'mop' using Spanish morphology (SOUTO-MANNING; MARTELL; PÉREZ; PIÓN, 2021).

Another way teachers can help bilingual and multilingual students improve their vocabulary is by making semantic word relations explicit (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). Activities in which learners differentiate between synonyms and antonyms, their shades of meaning, and their use in context may deepen learners' word knowledge (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021). Teachers can use “semantic networks, grids, or word webs that cluster words around a specific topic” (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021) and work on the differences between denotation and connotation. During pair/group work, students can use whichever language they like to discuss the literal and implied word meanings. Following a translanguaging pedagogy, “teachers eliminate constraints on language use to afford opportunities for students to engage with words” (AVALOS; BENGOCHEA; MALOVA; MASSEY, 2021).

A further linguistic aspect that may assist bilingual and multilingual students is how to sequence words in a sentence. In this sense, (4) **Syntactic knowledge** can also be advantageous for reading comprehension, especially when there are differences in structure between students' known languages. For instance, activities designed to raise students' awareness of the contrast in adjective placement in Portuguese, English, and Spanish could improve their text understanding (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021). Teachers could prepare a presentation providing explicit instruction on the structures, followed by guided practice in pairs or groups and independent practice with different peers (PARRA; PROCTOR, 2021).

In terms of the (5) **parts of a reading lesson**, using a translanguaging approach, teachers can divide their reading lessons into different segments. For instance, they can use a preview-view-review organization to develop knowledge and comprehension (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). In the first step, the preview moment, teachers

can use pre-reading strategies or activities in students' home language where they discuss after watching videos or some other media to activate their prior knowledge and build familiarity with the topic (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). At this point, pre-reading can also focus on fostering students' motivation to engage with the reading task (SONG; HOWARD; OLAZABAL-ARIAS, 2022). During the second step, students view or read the text in the language of instruction using the supports provided by the teacher, which could be specific to the task at hand, such as a glossary, translated vocabulary, pictures, or permanently available materials, like posters and word charts on the classroom walls (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). In the final step, teachers allow students to review in their home language or the language of instruction (or even mix the languages when appropriate), discuss any remaining questions, and make oral or written summaries of the text information (WAWIRE; BARNES-STORY, 2023). Post-reading discussions may also increase students' motivation to learn more about the topic (SONG; HOWARD; OLAZABAL-ARIAS, 2022).

Another organization model for the reading lesson involves many readings of a text. The idea is that students can have multiple exposures to the bilingual text, each time focusing on different aspects of language and literacy (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). Also, teachers can model translanguaging during activities to show learners they can use their named languages or linguistic repertoire strategically, according to the goal of each reading (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). As in the preview-view-review model, the first reading can include pre-reading questions in multiple languages (DUNHAM; MURDTER-ATKINSON; NASH; WETZEL, 2022; MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). In a second reading, students may focus on a specific matter of language use, such as why the characters employ a different language in certain parts of the story when reading a multilingual text (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021). A third reading could focus on the literacy goal established for the specific lesson (MOSES; HAJDUN; AGUIRRE, 2021).

Implementing a translanguaging pedagogy can also involve (6) **critical reading**. As the famous saying states, "Reading the world always precedes reading the word" (FREIRE; MACEDO, 2005, *apud* PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022, p. 301). Teachers need to foster learners' critical thinking skills when reading. One way of teaching students to read the world around them is to think about the language representations used in their educational environment (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022). Teachers can propose questions such as: 'What is the language used in the posters and other artwork on the walls?', 'What is the order of the languages represented?', 'Is there a language that always appears first or at the top?', 'What does this reveal regarding power relations?' and 'Can we change that reality?'. Bearing that in mind, teachers and students should not unconsciously accept the existing order of things as they are but act to change their reality (PRZYMUS; HEIMAN; HIBBS, 2022).

Finally, teachers can adopt a translanguaging (7) **read-aloud approach to storytelling**, making texts written in the language of instruction accessible to children from different language backgrounds and literacy proficiencies (KELLY, 2022). Engaging in the activity of reading out loud to children enhances their overall learning by expanding their knowledge base, improving their vocabulary, developing their ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in language, familiarizing them with the mechanics of printed text, and deepening their comprehension of different genres and structures within written works (WRIGHT, 2019, *apud* KELLY, 2022). While reading a book to their students, teachers can use body language to communicate, paraphrase and restate important parts, ask questions in students' preferred language, and use translations and examples (KELLY, 2022). It is worth pointing out that translanguaging read-aloud requires intense preparation so teachers can pinpoint possible problem areas and anticipate what solutions they will use when interacting with their students (KELLY, 2022).

FINAL REMARKS

In this study, we reviewed ten articles containing practical suggestions for teachers when implementing translanguaging in the reading classroom to offer insights to teachers in bi/multilingual environments. The teaching tips and experience reports revealed recommendations related to the interaction between teachers and students, interaction among students, materials and multimodality, vocabulary, syntax, parts of a reading lesson, critical reading, and storytelling. We expect that the experiences compiled in this work can contribute to teachers improving their practices in teaching reading and literacy, considering all the linguistic resources of their students.

The tips on translanguaging pedagogy described in this study are suitable for teachers and educators working with bilingual and multilingual students across several contexts in many countries. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these recommendations can also be advantageous for teachers in Brazil, who frequently encounter students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their classrooms. Clearly, a translanguaging approach to teaching should be conceptualized at the institutional level, with teacher participation. Unfortunately, Brazilian city, state, and federal educational systems do not have clear policies to ensure that bilingual and multilingual children develop their skills to the fullest extent possible.

As discussed, implementing a translanguaging approach to teaching reading requires educators to have some knowledge of the students' home languages, which can be challenging. One possible solution is to rely on technology and use gadgets such as computers, tablets, and smartphones to access the internet and translate students' speech in real-time. In places without internet connection, teachers can search for a volunteer interpreter within the community to participate in some classes to establish rapport with immigrant students.

It is worth highlighting that this review included only ten articles because of time constraints; thus, it is a concise literature review. Future reviews could encompass other text types, such as theses and dissertations, and use different databases. Also, future studies could investigate whether it is possible to apply the recommendations listed in this article in distinct contexts and if they significantly affect students' reading development.

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