



Teachers' Beliefs and Practices on Translanguaging and Code-Switching in Bilingual Education Settings

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Abstract

Translanguaging practices in Primary Education classrooms are essential for fostering inclusive environments that value linguistic diversity and support effective language learning. This study explores the experiences and perspectives of five English teachers working in Grades 4 to 6 within the Spanish education system, with a focus on their approaches to code-switching, classroom interaction, and language instruction. Drawing on a qualitative design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically to identify teachers' beliefs, strategies, and perceived challenges in using students' first language alongside English. Findings reveal a predominant preference for English as the main instructional language, complemented by strategic use of Spanish to aid comprehension, particularly when explaining grammar or checking understanding. Although not always familiar with the academic terminology, participants demonstrated practices aligned with translanguaging principles. The study highlights the need to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives and classroom realities and offers insights for teacher training and curriculum design aimed at supporting inclusive, flexible, and pedagogically sound approaches to language use in bilingual education.

Keywords: bilingual education, code-switching, ESL, pedagogical strategies, teacher's beliefs, translanguaging

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Creencias y prácticas de los docentes sobre el translingüismo y el cambio de código en entornos educativos bilingües

Resumen

Las prácticas de translingüismo en las aulas de Educación Primaria son esenciales para fomentar entornos inclusivos que valoren la diversidad lingüística y apoyen el aprendizaje eficaz de idiomas. Este estudio explora las experiencias y perspectivas de cinco profesores de inglés que trabajan en los cursos 4º a 6º del sistema educativo español, centrándose en sus enfoques sobre el cambio de código, la interacción en el aula y la enseñanza de idiomas. A partir de un diseño cualitativo, los datos se recogieron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y se analizaron temáticamente para identificar las creencias de los profesores, las estrategias y los retos percibidos en el uso de la primera lengua de los estudiantes junto con el inglés. Los resultados revelan una preferencia predominante por el inglés como lengua principal de instrucción, complementada por el uso estratégico del español para ayudar a la comprensión, especialmente al explicar la gramática o comprobar la comprensión. Aunque no siempre estaban familiarizados con la terminología académica, los participantes mostraron prácticas acordes con los principios del translingüismo. El estudio pone de relieve la necesidad de salvar la distancia entre las perspectivas teóricas y la realidad de las aulas, y ofrece ideas para la formación del profesorado y el diseño de planes de estudio que fomenten enfoques inclusivos, flexibles y pedagógicamente sólidos del uso de las lenguas en la enseñanza bilingüe.

Palabras clave: educación bilingüe, cambio de código, ESL, estrategias pedagógicas, creencias del docente, translingüismo

Introduction

In the realm of language education, the emergence of translanguaging as a transformative approach has challenged conventional notions of bilingualism and instructional methods. This paper explores the concepts of translanguaging and code-switching within the sphere of Primary Education, focusing on English language educators and their utilization of these dynamic linguistic strategies in bilingual educational settings. Translanguaging goes beyond traditional language boundaries, advocating for a fluid and comprehensive approach to language practices. It emphasizes that bilingual individuals do not merely switch between distinct language systems but instead utilize their entire linguistic repertoire seamlessly ([García & Wei, 2014](#)). This perspective underscores the interconnected nature of language skills in multilingual individuals and questions the conventional segregation of languages in educational contexts ([Rabbidge, 2019](#)).

Code-switching, often intertwined with translanguaging, involves the alternation between multiple languages within conversations or discourse. A prevalent phenomenon in multilingual societies, code-switching is increasingly recognized for its potential as a pedagogical tool. In educational settings, it can enhance comprehension, bridge cultural and linguistic divides, and offer a practical route to bilingualism ([Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2022](#)). Beyond effective communication, code-switching serves to support language learning in diverse classrooms. However, despite theoretical approval of these practices, a gap persists between pedagogical theory and their practical implementation in classrooms. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and classroom dynamics significantly influence the adoption and efficacy of translanguaging and code-switching strategies. This paper aims to illuminate these aspects by delving into the experiences and viewpoints of Primary Education teachers actively employing these approaches in English language instruction.

The study scrutinizes the intricacies and feasibility of integrating translanguaging and code-switching in an educational setting. It explores the challenges educators encounter, the strategies they employ, and the impact of these practices on student learning and classroom inclusivity. By examining these aspects across five teachers, the study endeavors to offer valuable insights into the alignment (or lack thereof) between theoretical concepts and practical applications in bilingual education. This exploration of translanguaging and code-switching not only enriches academic discourse but also carries significant implications for educational practice and policy. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how to structure and deliver bilingual education effectively considering students' diverse language backgrounds. The outcomes have the potential to influence teacher training programs, curriculum design, and policy-making processes with the goal of enhancing the quality and inclusivity of bilingual education. In essence, this paper aims to bridge the divide between linguistic theory and educational practice by thoroughly examining how translanguaging and code-switching manifest in real-world Primary Education classrooms.

Research on translanguaging in Spanish Primary Education has tended to focus either on policy documents or on students' experiences in bilingual programmes, while teachers' beliefs and everyday language practices have received comparatively less attention. Moreover, many studies treat code-switching and translanguaging as overlapping or interchangeable notions, without examining how teachers themselves interpret and operationalise these constructs in their day-to-day work. Positioned within this gap, the present study investigates how Primary English teachers in Spain conceptualise and negotiate their use of Spanish and English, and how their implicit practices align with, or diverge from, current debates on code-switching and translanguaging. In this study, code-switching is retained as a descriptive term reflecting the initial interview focus, whereas translanguaging provides the broader theoretical lens through which teachers' reported language practices are interpreted. This distinction also informs the analytical shift described below.

The main objectives of this study were:

1. Investigating translanguaging strategies and their effectiveness: To explore the strategies used by Primary Education teachers to encourage translanguaging in classrooms and to evaluate how effective these strategies are in improving students' understanding and use of English, as well as their learning in other subjects.
2. Understanding challenges and professional development in translanguaging: To identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing translanguaging and examine their views on integrating translanguaging into initial teacher training programs. This objective also includes understanding how teachers manage inappropriate or excessive use of translanguaging.
3. Evaluating the impact of using multiple languages on inclusion and linguistic diversity: To assess the extent to which translanguaging contributes to the inclusion of multilingual students in Primary classrooms and to investigate how teachers promote an environment that respects and values linguistic diversity.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach to explore teachers' beliefs and practices regarding translanguaging and code-switching in bilingual Primary Education contexts. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, which enabled the researchers to capture rich, detailed accounts of participants' perspectives and classroom practices. This design is particularly suited to exploring subjective interpretations and meanings in educational research ([O'Donoghue, 2007](#)).

Participants

The sample consisted of five English language teachers working in Grades 4, 5, and 6 of the Spanish Primary Education system. Participants ranged in age from 35 to 60 years and had between 10 and 30 years of teaching experience. Most had received similar teacher education training, which suggests a shared background in both theoretical and practical instruction. Recruitment was facilitated through school principals in Salamanca, who distributed an invitation to participate in the study. Interested teachers were contacted individually and gave informed consent for participation and audio recording.

Instruments and Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, following the guidelines proposed by [O'Donoghue \(2007\)](#). Interviews began with questions about personal background, followed by transition questions and a set of key items directly aligned with the study's research objectives (see [Appendix A](#) for the full interview guide). The format allowed for flexibility, enabling the interviewer to follow up on relevant comments and explore emerging themes. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, the teachers' first language, in order to facilitate rich, detailed accounts. The interview guide was originally designed in English and then adapted into Spanish so that participants could respond in the language in which they felt most comfortable.

Interviews were conducted either in person or via telephone, depending on participants' availability. Each session lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was audio recorded with the participants' consent (provided either verbally or in writing via email). The recordings were subsequently transcribed, and fillers and hesitations were removed to improve clarity during analysis. The excerpts quoted in the article were translated from Spanish into English by the researchers, preserving their original meaning as closely as possible.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using a sentence-based, inductive thematic coding approach focused on the two core constructs of the study: translanguaging and code-switching. Transcripts were read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas related to teachers' beliefs, rationales for language choice, classroom routines and perceived challenges. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories (Attitude, Praxis, Other Factors) and a set of more fine-grained subthemes that directly reflected the research questions. Throughout this iterative process, the emerging categories were constantly compared with the theoretical framework to trace patterns of convergence and divergence between teachers' reported practices and established pedagogical models. Given the small, qualitative sample, the analysis was not aimed at statistical generalisation but at generating an in-depth, illustrative account of teachers' perspectives.

Theoretical background

Language Learning and the Role of Input and Interaction

The academic discourse surrounding English language teaching in Primary Education has undergone significant evolution, delving into theoretical foundations that emphasize the sociocultural aspects of language acquisition. Building on [Vygotsky's \(1978\)](#) seminal work, [García et al. \(2017\)](#) underscore the vital role of social interactions in learning processes, both within and beyond the classroom, fostering practical language engagement in diverse social settings.

The concept of input, as elucidated by [Krashen \(1982\)](#), remains pivotal in understanding language acquisition, a notion supported by [Scott and Ytreberg \(1990\)](#), who advocate for exposure to language in varied forms. [Rodrigo et al. \(2003\)](#) further emphasize the importance of comprehensible input to facilitate learning. This concept is closely linked to output, the language produced by learners, essential for solidifying language acquisition and highlighting the necessity for a balanced exposure to language and active language use.

[Gass and Varonis \(1994\)](#) propose that interactions with native speakers can significantly enhance learning by compelling students to communicate in the new language. While beneficial, opportunities for such interactions may not always be feasible. [Dubiner \(2018\)](#) advocates for maximizing oral language use within the classroom to create linguistically rich learning environments.

The exploration of oral language benefits in the classroom heavily relies on input theory. [Duarte \(2019\)](#) suggests that language development accelerates when students have opportunities to listen to and speak the language they are learning. This aligns with [Azlan and Narasuman \(2013\)](#), who emphasize the teacher's role as a communicative guide, shaping the instructional framework and encouraging active use of the target language, as the absence of such a framework may lead students to default to their first language.

Code-Switching and Translanguaging in Bilingual Education

Rather than treating code-switching and translanguaging as parallel or competing constructs, this study follows recent work that argues for a shift from a code-switching lens to a translanguaging lens in language education ([Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021](#)). From this perspective, translanguaging offers a broader, heteroglossic view of bilinguals' meaning-making practices, whereas classroom code-switching is understood as one specific, more restricted manifestation of these practices. In the present study, we retain the term code-switching for descriptive purposes because it is widely used in the literature and appears in our interview protocol, but we interpret teachers' reported language choices primarily through the broader framework of translanguaging.

Extensively explored in educational contexts, code-switching, where individuals alternate between languages within discourse, has been studied by [Cameron \(2001\)](#), [Lee and Macaro \(2013\)](#), and [MacSwan and](#)

[Faltis \(2020\)](#), among others. Research suggests that code-switching can be a valuable pedagogical strategy aiding comprehension and facilitating a comparative understanding of linguistic structures, a view shared by [Sampson \(2012\)](#), who recognises its pragmatic applications in classrooms.

Building on and moving beyond traditional work on code-switching in bilingual education (e.g., [Poplack, 1980](#)), translanguaging has emerged as a pedagogical approach that encourages the use of students' entire linguistic repertoire. While early studies focused on patterns of language alternation in the speech of bilingual communities, this work has evolved into a more explicitly pedagogical perspective articulated by [García and Kleifgen \(2019\)](#), who advocate its application in language teaching. Translanguaging is characterised by dynamic interactions among languages, supporting the idea that multilingual individuals naturally draw on all their linguistic resources.

[Rabbidge \(2019\)](#) argues for fundamental similarities across languages, asserting that translanguaging aligns with language learners' inherent capabilities. [Topolska-Pado \(2010\)](#) supports students' engaging with their first language in classrooms, a view reinforced by [García and Wei \(2014\)](#), who emphasise normalising natural linguistic interactions among multilingual individuals.

Practical implications for classroom practice include utilising translanguaging to creatively access new knowledge in an engaging way. This approach not only supports language development but also enriches cognitive and academic growth. [García and Wei \(2014\)](#) provide concrete pedagogical strategies that resonate with [Creese's work \(2017\)](#), such as a systematic focus on cognates and asking students to create interlinguistic books.

Examining student perspectives, [Gunnarsson et al. \(2015\)](#) found that a majority preferred processing tasks in their first language before attempting them in English, indicating challenges associated with exclusive target-language teaching. This preference was consistent across different native languages, with less than 10% of students opting to process tasks directly in English.

In essence, while teaching English as a foreign or additional language often prioritises rich exposure to the target language for maximum input and assimilation, incorporating the first language should not be disregarded entirely ([Auerbach, 1993](#)). The first language can serve as a foundation for understanding the new language, particularly in contexts such as providing feedback or translating complex phrases. Teachers may strive to immerse classrooms in the target language while recognising the potential benefits of principled, limited code-switching. A sensible pedagogical strategy involves gradually increasing target-language use to help students become more comfortable and confident over time (Belz, 2003), while legitimising translanguaging as a resource rather than a deficit.

Pedagogical Implications and Curriculum Context

The Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training's educational reform [LOMLOE \(2020\)](#) outlines objectives for language competence, emphasizing students' oral and written communication skills development. This aligns with [Scott and Ytreberg's \(1990\)](#) emphasis on meaningful engagement with the target language. Similarly, [Duarte \(2019\)](#) advocates for authentic and significant language learning, echoing [Lightbown and Spada's \(2013\)](#) observation that students often rely on their first language to explore new linguistic territories.

In multicultural classrooms, where educational materials often stem from diverse linguistic backgrounds, learning a new language like English can be supported by the first language. However, challenges arise when not all students share the same first language. [Rosiers et al. \(2017\)](#) highlight the usefulness of bilingual glossaries in instructional materials as aids for students lacking proficiency in the dominant classroom language.

Batesman's (2008) study identifies factors complicating teachers' exclusive use of the target language, such as time constraints and planning stress in a non-native language. Teachers' anxiety over making mistakes or using the language incorrectly may lead them to prefer their first language, shared with most students. Meyers (2023) stresses the importance of clarity in teaching and using oral language to instill confidence in the classroom, as lacking clarity may result in teachers reverting to less familiar languages, hindering the language acquisition process.

In essence, the literature presents a holistic view of language learning as an interactive, dynamic process embedded in culture. The integration of translanguaging and code-switching within a broader pedagogical context aims to facilitate effective language acquisition through diverse and inclusive strategies (Rabidge, 2019). Balancing these approaches carefully is crucial to ensure they positively contribute to the learning environment without detracting from the primary goals of language education.

Study results and analysis

The interviews conducted are categorized based on the questions outlined in the research objectives. To illustrate how the interviews were conducted, the basic version of the survey is provided (see Appendix A). For clarity and ease of management, the informants' answers are grouped into three main categories: Attitude, Praxis, and Other Factors. Each category explores specific concepts related to these areas.

In analyzing the responses, our starting point was the concept of code-switching. Our aim was to ascertain the informants' prior familiarity with this concept and to explore their language usage in teaching contexts. Further examination of the material revealed a divergence in the understanding of code-switching between us and the informants. This necessitated a search for additional concepts to more accurately convey the informants' perspectives. Consequently, the research background was expanded, and the concept of translanguaging was incorporated into our discussion. The informants' feedback aligned with the notion that translanguaging should be integrated into classroom practices.

The interviewees were all experienced teachers of English for grades 4, 5 and 6 of the Spanish Primary Education system. They ranged in age from 35 to 60 years and had been teaching English for 10 to 30 years. Except for one individual, it can be inferred that the participants have undergone similar durations of teacher training. Therefore, they likely share comparable levels of theoretical and practical experience from their teacher education programs.

Attitude

In this context, 'attitude' refers to the information that clarifies the informants' positions regarding the research conducted. These data are analyzed and interpreted to investigate teachers' viewpoints on research related to using a second language orally in a target language classroom. Defining this concept helps focus the results section and establishes a starting point for analysis, where the informants' feedback is compared with the foundational research.

Findings related to Attitude responses

Teachers were questioned regarding their familiarity with the concept of code-switching and their comprehension of the term. This concept was introduced during interviews to initiate discussions on various research outcomes.

Attitude 1: English as the default classroom language

Teacher 1 acknowledged being unfamiliar with code-switching, stating no prior knowledge of the term. Teacher 2 also confirmed having no previous exposure to the concept. Similarly, Teacher 3, lacking

familiarity, inferred the meaning from the interview questions. In contrast, Teacher 4 recalled some awareness of code-switching, while Teacher 5 considered it entirely new. Following the explanation of code-switching as defined in the document, the informants were asked to reflect on their use of code-switching in their teaching practices. As Teacher 2 put it, "In English, English is our language of communication." This statement reflects a clear preference for English as the default instructional language, even when teachers recognise a role for strategic language alternation.

Attitude 2: Purposeful use of Spanish for clarity and support

Their collective opinion leaned towards favoring English-medium instruction, although they recognized the potential benefits of code-switching.

Teacher 1 expressed a positive view of code-switching, highlighting its role in facilitating transitions between languages. The teacher emphasized the importance of maximal language stimulation for learners to articulate in English early on, fostering comfort in English communication. This educator advocated for active engagement in English language instruction and noted differences in language use willingness across various age groups. Additionally, Teacher 1 pointed out that the effectiveness of code-switching depends on students' proficiency in Spanish as a foundational language and highlighted challenges for students without Spanish as a school language.

Teacher 2 advocated for English as the primary language of instruction, emphasizing the necessity for students to engage with and understand English. The teacher expressed skepticism about verbatim translations, preferring a nuanced approach to code-switching that avoids literal translations and focuses on reinforcing practical phraseology. As Teacher 2 explained, "It's always clearer to them when you tell them in Spanish, although I try not to do it very often." This reflects a view of Spanish as a strategic resource for ensuring comprehension rather than as a routine alternative to English.

Attitude 3: Tensions around academic terminology

Teacher 2 explicitly distinguished between terminology and familiar classroom practice: "I'd never called it that before. Using both languages—that's normal in class." This suggests a gap between teachers' familiarity with multilingual classroom practices and their familiarity with the academic terminology used to describe them.

Teacher 3's perspective on code-switching varied based on students' English proficiency levels. The teacher believed that the frequency of language exchange should be adjusted to ensure comprehensive understanding by learners and emphasized aiding non-Spanish speaking students with translations and body language for effective communication.

Teacher 4 emphasized the importance of using code-switching to reinforce instruction and assist students in acquiring new English vocabulary. The teacher preferred primarily using English but incorporating strategic code-switching when necessary to aid comprehension.

Teacher 5 suggested anchoring instruction in English supplemented by reading comprehension checks and student paraphrasing activities to demonstrate understanding. The teacher highlighted challenges faced by students who struggle with independent usage despite perceived comprehension, advocating for English-dominant instruction to foster learners' ability to generate their own language output.

Analysis of Attitude findings

The inclusion of code-switching as an initial discussion point for various research findings was pivotal. When queried about their familiarity with code-switching, most participants reported little or no prior knowledge,

although Teacher 4 recalled some awareness of the term. Yet, upon presentation of the research, each teacher recognized and supported the integration of English with occasional code-switching. This indicates that while code-switching is not a widely recognized concept among the interviewed practicing teachers, its interpretation aligns positively with their perceived teaching practices.

A notable discrepancy, however, existed between the teachers' understanding and the concept's definition as outlined in preceding sections. This discrepancy may stem from ambiguities in explaining the concept during interviews or the teachers' inclination to relate the concept to their instructional methodologies. For instance, the informants' tendency to think in terms of translanguaging when discussing translation for comprehension or using body language for clarification was evident.

Most teachers emphasized the primacy of English as the instructional language, advocating for early and extensive English exposure to enhance student assimilation. This approach parallels [Kaushanskaya and Crespo's \(2019\)](#) assertion that early language exposure enhances effective learning, particularly in children, a notion also supported by [Copeland and Yonetsugi \(2016\)](#). Teachers also underscored the significance of accustoming pupils to listening to spoken English from a young age, facilitating language familiarity as they mature. This aligns with [Lee and Macaro's \(2013\)](#) proposition of a gradual, incremental approach to English-only instruction.

Teachers unanimously agreed on the central role of English in instruction, with additional emphasis on English being the primary language for directives. This mirrors [Sampson's \(2012\)](#) advocacy for English as the preferable instructional language. However, Sampson also noted that students need not always use the target language, advocating for a balanced approach.

During the interviews, research findings were shared, illustrating that oral English interspersed with code-switching could be beneficial in the educational context. Teachers were then asked to evaluate the strengths and challenges of these findings. They identified potential pitfalls such as unequal language assimilation conditions among students, underscoring the necessity for tailored planning and individualized instruction.

Discussion also revolved around the interplay between Spanish and English, with teachers noting that constant alternation might diminish the perceived importance of the target language. Teacher 2, for instance, expressed reservations about giving instructions in both Spanish and English, aligning with [Dubiner's \(2018\)](#) caution against overreliance on the first language. The teacher highlighted the risk that students might become accustomed to awaiting Spanish translations, impeding their engagement with English.

Praxis

In this context, "praxis" pertains to the practical teaching experiences recounted by informants in the language classroom. This includes detailed descriptions of classroom interactions and encompasses specific activities and conversations that occur during English language instruction. The analytical framework is centered on the question: 'When and why do teachers utilize languages other than English in instructional settings?' The subsequent results section presents a range of statements that shed light on teachers' perspectives regarding their teaching practices. These insights are compared with established scholarly viewpoints on teaching methodologies. It is crucial to highlight the lack of direct observation in this study, which limits our ability to examine actual teaching methods. Instead, the analysis relies on teachers' self-reports, which are considered to provide a partial reflection of their teaching approaches.

Findings related to Praxis responses

The teachers participating in the study initiated their reflections by exploring the concept of code-switching introduced to them, which they then applied to their bilingual (Spanish and English) teaching practices.

This led to open discussions among students about how they interpreted the concept in relation to their teaching methodologies. The primary focus was on how teachers articulated their teaching methods considering existing research and the practical application of the concept.

Praxis 1: Integrating code-switching into classroom practice

Teacher 1 described her approach as influenced by her newfound understanding of code-switching, a concept she had not previously acknowledged. While she occasionally translated words, her instruction predominantly occurred in English, believing that early immersion in English significantly boosts language development. Teacher 1 emphasized the importance of encouraging students to communicate in English actively for effective language acquisition. She strategically used Spanish for translating novel terms to highlight them for students, tailoring her approach based on different grade levels. As she explained, “we have to push their linguistic development as far as possible so that pupils can express themselves in the new language as soon as possible and feel comfortable speaking English” (Teacher 1). This suggests that English-dominant instruction was understood not simply as exposure, but as a means of promoting early learner production and confidence.

Teacher 2 emphasized delivering instructions primarily in English, with clear communication to students when transitioning to another language, particularly Spanish for explaining grammatical concepts. This teacher advocated for English as the main mode of communication in English lessons, aiming to model behavior that encourages student engagement in English and fosters language production.

Praxis 2: Adapting language use to students' proficiency and needs

Teacher 3 adjusted their language use based on class needs and individual student comprehension levels, transitioning between languages to ensure all students understood the instruction. This adaptability included providing complete English immersion for a student returning from an English-speaking environment while calibrating lesson delivery for universal comprehension and tailoring challenges to individual student capabilities. As Teacher 3 explained, “The class decides the level of each lesson every day. You always must adapt; you don’t stick to a set plan.” This highlights the extent to which language use and instructional choices are adjusted in response to the needs of each group.

Teacher 4 utilized translation to engage students and facilitate discussions or presentations in Spanish to enhance cross-linguistic development and comprehensive understanding. This teacher supplemented texts with translations and additional explanations in English, emphasizing clarity and repetition for student comprehension.

Praxis 3: Teaching grammar and complex content through L1 support

Teacher 5 started instruction in English, assessing student inclusion and comprehension through activities like repeating instructions delivered in English. Linguistic alternation occurred when students struggled to follow instructions, requiring translation for clarity. The teacher highlighted grammar as a challenging area for learners, advocating for using Spanish to teach grammatical structures to facilitate their application in student-produced language. As Teacher 5 summarised, “It’s about comprehension, about understanding when to use this and that.” This indicates that L1 support in grammar teaching was framed primarily as a means of securing conceptual understanding.

Analysis of Praxis findings

The educators involved in the study indicated that their teaching approaches were influenced by shared principles, particularly their understanding of code-switching. They highlighted that most of their classroom instruction is conducted in English, with intentional and strategic use of Spanish for specific purposes.

Teacher 2 emphasized the importance of explaining the reasons for language shifts, using markers to signal the use of Spanish. This practice, as described by Teacher 2, enhances students' awareness of why a language other than the target language is used in the classroom. This aligns with [Li-ping's \(2004\)](#) argument that teachers should model English use in English language classrooms while allowing students to query or interact in their first language if needed.

Teacher 2's reported effort to use as much English as possible reflects a belief in the utility of the mother tongue in instruction, a sentiment echoed by other participants. This underscores a pedagogical focus on maximizing oral language exposure in the classroom. [Cameron \(2001\)](#) emphasizes the importance of oral language participation in educational settings, highlighting its scarcity outside of school. Interviewees stressed the significance of not excessively relying on code-switching and establishing English as the primary communication language in English classrooms, aligning with [Sampson's \(2012\)](#) perspective.

Teacher 1 prefers using alternative English expressions before resorting to Spanish when explaining unfamiliar concepts. However, instances where students misunderstand content after English instruction prompt the use of Spanish. The teachers noted that excessive use of English without repetition or additional expressions can be challenging for students.

Moreover, the teachers emphasized challenging students' comprehension through substantial spoken English to enhance their communication skills progressively. They also highlighted how student group composition and age influence their use of spoken English in instruction, with different age groups requiring varied approaches to language learning.

A significant aspect observed was the teaching of grammar, where teachers predominantly used Spanish as the instructional language. This aligns with scholars like [Cameron \(2001\)](#) who advocate for using the first language during grammar instruction for better comprehension. Teacher 5 stressed understanding grammatical structures over performance in listening or speaking, supported by [Rabbidge \(2019\)](#) and [Lightbown and Spada \(2013\)](#), who discuss how learners build new structures based on their first language foundation.

The teachers noted that students with higher proficiency in spoken English can follow instruction delivered in English, while others may need additional support. Teacher 3 shared an anecdote about a student returning from an English-speaking environment who preferred more English usage in class, highlighting the importance of tailoring instruction to individual learner needs.

Teaching a secondary class entirely in English presents challenges but is feasible with commitment and effort from both teachers and students, as discussed by [Cameron \(2003\)](#). The teachers suggested various strategies like using pictures and body language for clarification and incorporating simpler words or Spanish translations to aid learner comprehension amidst complex English terms.

Other influential factors

This section encompasses factors identified during the interviews with educators as significant elements influencing language teaching. The interviews provided educators with a platform to explore their teaching methods in greater depth, surpassing the predefined boundaries of the interview guide. Essential factors surfaced during these discussions, deemed crucial by the educators in the realm of language instruction. Aligned with the fundamental principles of the research, these factors play a substantial role in shaping both the analytical framework and subsequent discussions. Consequently, the results section integrates data related to concepts such as comprehension, essentiality, and guidelines, which are subsequently aligned with existing research for contextualization.

Findings related to Other Factors responses

Factor 1: Classroom rules and affective climate

Classroom regulations, as articulated by Teacher 1, form the bedrock of the learning process. Guidelines such as refraining from mocking mistakes and helping when needed are pivotal in establishing an effective learning environment. This teacher underscores the importance of motivating students in language acquisition, emphasizing the need for a supportive classroom ambiance that fosters self-exploration and risk-taking in language learning. Educators also contemplate diverse challenges and circumstances evident in the practical aspects of language instruction within educational settings. Teacher 4 expressed this principle explicitly: "The first rule is that they must respect each other. Nobody makes fun of a classmate for making a mistake. I won't allow that." This reflects the importance attached to creating a classroom environment in which learners can use language without fear of ridicule.

Factor 2: Multilingual profiles and language prerequisites

A significant challenge identified is the lack of prerequisites among students for proficient code-switching between Spanish and English. For example, Teacher 1 highlights the necessity of a strong grasp of Spanish to effectively incorporate Spanish translations of English terms. Insufficient proficiency in Spanish, as noted by this educator, impedes successful English acquisition through code-switching. Teacher 2 stresses the value of the mother tongue, advocating for support in introducing students to the Spanish language to establish a basis for inclusion and integration, thereby facilitating Spanish language assimilation. As Teacher 4 observed, "I have pupils from many different backgrounds; treating them all as if they spoke the same language doesn't work." This illustrates how linguistic diversity complicates the assumption that Spanish can function as a common support language for all learners.

Factor 3: Structural constraints and performance pressure

Teacher 4 observes that students excel in acquiring a new language through Spanish when it is more familiar to them. Teacher 5 acknowledges the difficulty in addressing individual needs within a diverse classroom, underscoring the challenge faced by a single educator in meeting varied requirements during a teaching session. Similarly, Teacher 3 emphasizes the need to adapt instruction to ensure comprehensive engagement with content, recognizing the differing proficiency levels among students in the same class. Teacher 1 clarifies that despite varying levels, the overarching goal across the classroom remains consistent: ensuring all students attain a passing grade threshold. Teacher 5 described the practical difficulty directly: "The worst thing is having children at different levels. You can't meet everyone's needs. You end up neglecting the best ones." This points to the structural constraints teachers face when attempting to individualise instruction within a single classroom.

Analysis of Other Factors findings

Educators recognize additional elements beyond group dynamics and age that profoundly influence their teaching approaches and their capacity to cater to individual student needs. They acknowledge a wide array of factors that impact pedagogical strategies. For instance, Teacher 1 emphasizes the universal pursuit of learning objectives among all students while acknowledging the diverse individual expectations regarding learning outcomes.

Teacher 1 stresses the early establishment of classroom rules as essential. These rules encompass behaviors like refraining from ridicule and aiding others in achieving collective goals. According to Teacher 1, cultivating a mindset in students that reduces the fear of making mistakes is crucial. This viewpoint aligns with the concept that creating a safe and open classroom environment is crucial for effective teaching and student development, as proposed by [Shu-hua \(2009\)](#).

The multicultural composition of classrooms emerges as a recurring theme in the interviews. For example, Teacher 4 notes an increasing number of students with diverse first languages, requiring tailored support to integrate into the classroom based on their unique backgrounds. [Rosiers et al. \(2017\)](#) suggest tools like glossaries in English textbooks with Spanish translations as beneficial for learners lacking proficiency in Spanish. Teacher 1 highlights that students with different language foundations may encounter challenges in English classes due to reliance on Spanish translations.

Educators also stress the general challenges of engaging, motivating, and fostering understanding among all learners. The significant obstacle of adapting lesson content extensively to different levels and individual needs is acknowledged. Teachers recognize the particular challenge of meeting all students' needs during a lesson when acting as the sole educator in the classroom. This underscores that language choice is just one aspect among many in teaching, with varying emphasis on language depending on time and available resources.

Discussion

An essential component of the analytical process in this study involved identifying recurring concepts in the interview responses, expanding beyond the central themes of code-switching and translanguaging. Concepts like understanding and necessity were frequently cited and could be effectively connected to existing research. Particularly, educators unanimously view comprehension as a fundamental and consistent element shaping their teaching methodologies. This is consistent with the concept of *comprehensible input* proposed by [Krashen \(1982\)](#), which suggests that language acquisition is maximized when learners can understand language that is slightly above their current level, supported by contextual cues. Exploring these concepts enables a more nuanced comparison and contrast, with each concept open to interpretation and capable of encompassing various explanations, appealing to a broader audience.

These identified concepts formed the foundation for the analysis, enabling a comparison between research findings and interview responses, thereby laying the groundwork for drawing conclusions about effective teaching practices.

During the analysis, a significant issue emerged concerning the teachers' interpretation of code-switching, which differed from the initial concept presented. Post-analysis, teachers viewed code-switching primarily as a shift from one language to another, often using spoken Spanish for grammar explanations instead of English. This understanding leans more towards a language switch rather than traditional code-switching. The teachers' descriptions exhibit similarities to aspects of translanguaging, indicating an understanding of the advantages of blending languages in educational settings.

The findings also speak directly to debates about the relationship between code-switching and translanguaging. Although the teachers in this study did not use either term spontaneously, their descriptions of purposeful language alternation and of drawing flexibly on Spanish and English align more closely with a translanguaging lens than with a narrow, structural view of classroom codeswitching. In line with [Goodman and Tastanbek's \(2021\)](#) call to shift from a codeswitching to a translanguaging lens in teacher education, our analysis treats the teachers' references to "switching" between languages as one manifestation of a broader, heteroglossic repertoire that they mobilise to make content comprehensible, manage classrooms and support multilingual learners.

For example, the emphasis on comprehension and the varied use of instructional language to enhance student understanding align with [García and Wei's \(2014\)](#) view of languages as tools for learning new languages. Teachers also recognized situations where students need assistance in a language other than the target language, especially when focusing on grammar. In such cases, Spanish serves as a supportive tool to reinforce understanding or assess students' progress. While discussions predominantly revolved around Spanish compared to English during interviews, the broader concept of translanguaging may involve

additional languages. Nonetheless, given the study's emphasis on Spanish in language classrooms, these interpretations and insights from participants remained relevant and valuable.

In the interviews conducted, educators consistently expressed a preference for English as the primary language of communication in the classroom, a position particularly evident in Teacher 2's responses. Nevertheless, they acknowledged specific situations where deviating from this norm becomes necessary. These exceptions typically occur for purposes of clarification, translation, or when the focus shifts to grammatical aspects rather than language production. For instance, [Cameron \(2001\)](#) acknowledges that using a non-target language for grammatical instruction can be justified to improve student understanding. This is further supported by Lightbown and Spada (2013), who affirm that judicious use of L1 can scaffold new language learning without compromising the overall exposure to the target language.

Throughout the interviews, educators predominantly focused on English as the instructional language, with less emphasis on code-switching. Interactions with educators provided concrete examples of using both English and Spanish in the classroom, shifting the analytical emphasis from code-switching to the application of the target language and Spanish. This shift may stem from educators' unfamiliarity with code-switching or their interpretation of it as switching between the languages they teach. Considering this, incorporating the broader concept of translanguaging in future research could facilitate deeper discussions and enhance understanding of educators' practical teaching approaches.

Educators discussed their methods for clarifying and translating terms, which heavily depend on their assessment of student comprehension and whether students grasp the content. However, specific strategies for identifying lack of understanding were not explicitly outlined, assuming educators possess the skills to recognize such situations.

Furthermore, educators mentioned utilizing various strategies to explain and simplify content, such as using familiar English words and concepts. The criteria for determining word familiarity were not elaborated upon by the interviewees. Exploring these strategies in more depth could have provided richer insights; however, such inquiries might have been perceived as questioning the educators' expertise. While it is possible to pose these questions, they should be carefully formulated to avoid implying scrutiny. Educators also highlighted techniques like rephrasing for clarity to demonstrate to students how these methods can help overcome language barriers. They indicated that translations and specific phrases are not their primary approaches but are used when students struggle with comprehension. Allowing students to rephrase instructions is another strategy employed by educators to assess understanding. These strategies reflect what [Gass and Varonis \(1994\)](#) describe as interactionally modified input—where negotiation of meaning plays a central role in language development.

[Azlan and Narasuman \(2013\)](#) propose a perspective where teachers are seen as linguistic and communicative role models, emphasizing the importance of using English as the primary language of communication. This view is supported by [Scott and Ytreberg \(1990\)](#), who argue that active engagement with the target language is crucial for language acquisition. Teachers' teaching methods are centered on the belief that exposure to language is essential for its effective use. For example, Teacher 1's approach of consistently using English in class and encouraging students to do the same reflects this philosophy.

The spoken language used by teachers creates an environment that motivates students to actively participate in language production, as highlighted by [Svensson \(2021\)](#). Encouraging students to converse in English by modeling such behavior provides them with a strong foundation in language learning. [Lee and Macaro \(2013\)](#) support a gradual immersion in the target language, which aligns with the views of the teachers interviewed. There is a consensus among teachers that early and continuous exposure to English helps students become comfortable using it as their primary language of communication in language learning.

During the initial discussions, most teachers were unfamiliar with the term "code-switching," although they acknowledged its practice in teaching when necessary for student understanding. While English is

emphasized for instruction, teachers recognize that exclusive use of English may not be ideal, especially for students in Grades 4 to 6, consistent with [Auerbach's \(1993\)](#) perspective on English-medium instruction for middle school and adult learners. The interviewed teachers do not foresee an immediate shift to exclusive English instruction due to varying proficiency levels and linguistic backgrounds among students, requiring differentiated support strategies that may involve switching languages.

The analysis indicates that educators generally support predominantly using English as the medium of instruction, reserving Spanish for specific contexts. These findings, although not universally applicable to all English teachers in Spain, suggest a potential enhancement of practices during interviews. While based on a limited sample and self-reported practices, teachers' responses demonstrate an understanding of effective classroom strategies outlined in research, such as target language instruction, grammar importance, and challenges related to multilingualism. Further empirical research is essential to delve deeper into these practices and their effectiveness.

These results also reinforce [García and Wei's \(2014\)](#) claim that translanguaging is not merely a formal model but an emergent and intuitive response to classroom diversity. The data suggest that pedagogical flexibility, as observed in these interviews, aligns closely with sociocultural theories of learning ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)) and confirms that teachers, even in the absence of explicit training in multilingual frameworks, draw on practical and theoretically sound strategies to foster student understanding and engagement.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a small, convenience sample of five teachers from a single region in Spain, which constrains the transferability of the findings. Second, the data are based solely on relatively short (15–20 minute) semi-structured interviews and do not include classroom observations or student perspectives, which would have provided a more direct picture of actual classroom practices. Third, although the interview protocol included a question about parents' views (see [Appendix A](#)), parental involvement and home-school dynamics were outside the analytical scope of the present article and were therefore not analysed as a separate theme. As a result, the role of parents and caregivers in translanguaging practices remains underexplored. Future research could address these limitations by combining interviews with longitudinal classroom observation and by incorporating both student and family voices.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this inquiry was to elucidate how educators teaching English to students in Grades 4 to 6 engage with and interpret research-informed pedagogical practices in English instruction. The articulated perspectives and accumulated experiences of these educators are intricately linked to their daily classroom realities, while also reflecting a tacit awareness of key theoretical frameworks related to bilingual education. The data collected revealed that teachers' actions are shaped not only by practical demands but also by internalized principles consistent with sociocultural theory ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)), the importance of comprehensible input ([Krashen, 1982](#); [Rodrigo et al., 2003](#)), and the affordances of translanguaging ([García & Wei, 2014](#)).

Despite most teachers' initial unfamiliarity with the terminology of code-switching and translanguaging, the teachers demonstrated practices that align closely with both. Strategic use of the first language—primarily Spanish—was employed to support clarity, grammar instruction, and student confidence, resonating with [Sampson's \(2012\)](#) notion of purpose-driven L1 integration and [Duarte's \(2019\)](#) emphasis on meaningful language mediation. Although teachers reported a preference for English as the main instructional language, they acknowledged that maintaining comprehensibility and inclusivity sometimes required flexible transitions between languages, especially in mixed-proficiency classrooms.

Importantly, the study highlights that the perceived gap between theory and practice is not rooted in resistance or lack of awareness, but in the necessary negotiation between ideal models and complex

classroom demands. The findings reinforce [García and Wei's \(2014\)](#) view of translanguaging as a natural, adaptive process that multilingual teachers and learners already engage in intuitively. Teachers in this study employed diverse strategies to support understanding, such as rephrasing, gestural support, and eliciting student paraphrasing—which align with both sociocognitive and interactionist theories of language acquisition ([Lightbown & Spada, 2013](#); [Gass & Varonis, 1994](#)).

The analysis also shows strong alignment between teachers' reflective practices and what the literature identifies as effective pedagogical conduct. Educators consistently emphasized comprehension as the driving force behind their language choices, often prioritizing the learners' ability to engage meaningfully with content over strict adherence to monolingual norms. While not all educators explicitly outlined the rationale behind each instance of code-switching, there was a shared understanding that flexibility, when used strategically, enhances learning outcomes and supports student inclusion.

From a teacher education perspective, these findings point to at least three concrete implications. First, initial and in-service teacher education programmes in Spain could explicitly address translanguaging and code-switching, not only as theoretical constructs but as tools for designing principled, context-sensitive language policies at the classroom level. Second, curriculum guidelines and materials for Primary English teaching should legitimise the strategic use of students' full linguistic repertoires, for example by including tasks that invite planned movement between Spanish and English rather than enforcing rigid separation. Third, schools and teacher educators could provide structured spaces for teachers to reflect collectively on their language practices, making their intuitive strategies visible and aligning them with research-informed multilingual pedagogies. In doing so, translanguaging ceases to be an implicit, "common-sense" practice and becomes a deliberate component of inclusive language education.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on translanguaging and code-switching by offering empirical insights from a Primary Education context in Spain—an area often underexplored in the literature. The findings suggest that teachers' intuitive practices can serve as a foundation for more explicit, theoretically grounded training in multilingual pedagogies. Ultimately, fostering pedagogical environments that acknowledge and integrate students' full linguistic repertoires offers a powerful pathway toward more inclusive and effective language education.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

OpenAI's ChatGPT 5.5 was used for grammatical and stylistic revision of the manuscript. The final wording was reviewed and approved by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the content.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire on Translanguaging and Code-switching in the Classroom

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is a questionnaire designed to gather information about teachers' perspectives on translanguaging and code-switching in the classroom. Your participation is voluntary and all responses will remain confidential. The information collected will be used for academic research purposes only.

Note: Please fill in the following information. You may tick boxes where applicable and provide additional details as necessary.

General Information:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Education Center: _____

Grade Year of Teaching: _____

Years of Experience Teaching: _____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

1.	Do you know what translanguaging and code-switching are?	
2.	Have you heard about them before?	
	If not, what do you think they could be?	
3.	Do you reflect upon the use English or Spanish in your teaching?	
	(If yes) When do you actively choose to use Spanish and English?	
	(If no) If you think about it now, in which situation do you think you use English and Spanish respectively.	
4.	What specific strategies do you use to promote translanguaging in the classroom?	
5.	How do you evaluate the effectiveness of translanguaging on students' comprehension and production in English?	
6.	To what extent do you think translanguaging benefits the learning of subjects other than English in the context of Primary Education?	
7.	How do you manage situations in which students use translanguaging inappropriately or excessively?	
8.	What is your opinion on the integration of translanguaging in initial teacher education in Primary Education?	
9.	What challenges have you faced in implementing translanguaging in your teaching practice and how have you overcome them?	

10. To what extent do you think translanguaging contributes to the inclusion of multilingual learners in the Primary classroom?	
11. How do you involve parents in the process of translanguaging and what feedback have you received from them about it?	
12. What resources and materials do you use to support translanguaging in the Primary classroom?	
13. How do you promote an environment of respect and appreciation of linguistic diversity among your students through translanguaging?	
14. Research findings on code-switching indicate that we should use as much English as possible, though some code-switching can be beneficial as long as there is a clear purpose behind it. What do you think about these findings on code-switching?	
15. What disadvantages can you find in translanguaging and code-switching?	

Source: Own elaboration

Additional comments or open responses:

