



REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

English Learners, Curriculum and Instruction

September 2019

Question:

What research supports the use of translanguaging in the classroom as an effective strategy to build multilingual skills?

Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to the evidence base on translanguaging as an effective strategy to support students' multilingual abilities (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). We focused our search in particular on studies in the Pacific and other indigenous contexts for greater relevancy to our partners in the Pacific region; however, we included studies with more generalizable findings due to the limited amount of research available in these contexts.

References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts. We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, our search included the most commonly used research resources, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

Research References

De Los Reyes, R.A. (2019). Translanguaging in multilingual third grade ESL classrooms in Mindanao, Philippines. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 16(3), 302–316. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1221117>.

From the abstract: “With the present implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines, this study investigated the language practices of teachers and learners (collectively 'participants') in the teaching and learning of English as a second language (ESL) in two Third Grade classrooms in a multilingual city in the Philippines. Using qualitative measures (classroom observations, semi-structured interviews), this study primarily found that the participants used language

practices, which this study argues should be subsumed under translanguaging, either explicitly or implicitly, to mediate their communicative functions that are crucial in ESL classrooms. Through translanguaging, the teachers were able to present their lessons, conduct classroom discussions, enhance students' understanding, and manage student behaviour more effectively and efficiently; and the students, in turn, were able to participate in classroom discussions and substantively demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This study posits that multilingual teachers and learners utilise their language practices in the classroom to enhance meaning amongst themselves and between them and their tasks. This study further argues that since translanguaging is demonstrated by the participants as their inherent practice as multilinguals, it can be better understood when viewed from the perspective of multilingualism.”

Esquinca, A., Araujo, B., de la Piedra, M. T. (2014). Meaning making and translanguaging in a two-way dual-language program on the U.S.-Mexico border. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 37(2), 164–181. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1035463>.

From the abstract: “The article analyzes meaning-making practices in a two-way dual-language (TWDL) program on the U.S.-Mexico border among ‘transfronterizo’ and Mexican-origin youth. In the article, we show that emergent bilingual learners and their teacher participate in activities that mediate understanding of science content knowledge. We show how the teacher of a fourth-grade TWDL classroom creates a borderland space in which the full repertoire of students’ languages, including translanguaging, is recognized and validated. We illustrate how the teacher, Ms. O, guides students to use strategies and meaning-making tools in both languages to construct meanings of the science content. We also demonstrate how she scaffolds students’ language development, develops students’ higher-order thinking, and involves all students in constructing understanding. We end with a discussion and suggestions for dual-language teaching.”

Makalela, L. (2015). Moving out of linguistic boxes: The effects of translanguaging strategies for multilingual classrooms. *Language and Education*, 29(3), 200–217. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1051946>.

From the abstract: “This paper reports on an investigation into the efficacy of a teacher preparation programme that introduced the teaching of African languages to speakers of other African languages in order to produce multi-competent and multi-vocal teachers. A mixed method approach was used to elicit from a pool of 60 (30 experimental; 30 control group) multilingual pre-service teachers the participants’ storied reflections and their reading and vocabulary achievement scores. The results of the study show that translanguaging techniques used in the experimental class afforded the participants affective and social advantages as well as a deep understanding of the content. Similarly, a paired t-test has shown a statistically significant differential performance in favour of the experimental group after three months of a translanguaging intervention programme. Using the translanguaging approach, and comparing it to an “ubuntu” lens of viewing the world from an amorphous and continuous cultural space, I argue for development of a multilingual teaching pedagogy that is premised on this worldview to advance theory and

practices of translanguaging as a teachable strategy. Future research possibilities are highlighted and pedagogical implications for multilingual classrooms are considered for adaptations in comparable contexts.”

Menken, K. (2013). Emergent bilingual students in secondary school: Along the academic language and literacy continuum. *Language Teaching*, 46(4), 438–476. Retrieved from <https://katemenken.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/menken-2013-language-teaching.pdf>

From the abstract: “This article offers a critical review of research about emergent bilingual students in secondary school, where the academic demands placed upon them are great, and where instruction typically remains steadfast in its monolingualism. I focus on recent scholarship about the diversity within this student population, and center on ‘students with interrupted formal education’ (SIFE, new arrivals who have no home language literacy skills or are at the beginning stages of literacy learning) and ‘long-term English language learners’ (LTELs, primarily educated in their receiving country yet still eligible for language support services). Little has been published about these students, making this a significant area of inquiry. Moreover, both groups are characterized by poor performance and together illustrate the characteristics of secondary students at various points along an academic language and literacy continuum. While existing research provides important information to help us improve secondary schooling for emergent bilinguals, it has also perpetuated deficit views of these students by focusing solely on their perceived academic shortcomings. Grounded in a new body of research in applied linguistics that examines the students’ complex, creative, and dynamic language and literacy practices, I apply a translanguaging lens to critique the positioning of such students as deficient, with implications for research and practice.”

Pratt, K. L. (2018). Hopeful possibilities in dual language bilingual education in the Pacific Northwest. *The WERA Educational Journal*, 11(1), 33–39. Retrieved from <https://www.wera-web.org/assets/docs/WEJ/WEJ%20November%202018%20Journal%20Volume%2011%2C%20Number%201.pdf#page=33>

From the abstract: "This article summarizes a four-year ethnographic study that calls us to ponder dual language bilingual educational practices and norms. The study looked at the intersection of federal and state language education policies and classroom teaching and learning events through an in-depth analysis of the language practices in dual language bilingual contexts. Participants engaged in translanguaging practices for bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural determinations as language was authorized differently at different times for different purposes. The use of participants' full linguistic repertoires during instruction served as an effective shift to challenge language separation policies, which historically have viewed bilingual students as two monolinguals in one. The study offers examples of the realities, tensions, and hopeful promise of translanguaging within dual language classroom contexts for integrating partner languages in more natural and affirming ways. The study builds on the current understanding of the nature of translanguaging in bilingual spaces, and it augments current discussions about translanguaging by providing contextual, tangible, and nuanced examples of

translanguaging in practice within a dual language classroom. The study offers rich insight into the empowering processes of becoming bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural through meaningful and authentic language experiences."

Si'ilata, R. (2019). Teachers' professional learning and practice with multilingual Pacific/Pasifika learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. In S. Hammer, K. Mitchell Viesca, & N.L. Commins (Eds.), *Teaching content and language in the multilingual classroom: International research on policy, perspectives, preparation and practice* (168–191). Retrieved from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429459443/chapters/10.4324/9780429459443-13>.

From the abstract: "The overarching purpose of this research was to identify the specific actions of effective teachers of multilingual Pasifika learners in English-medium elementary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand that led to acceleration of their language and literacy learning, ultimately enabling their success at school. From the literature and the findings of this research, the dimensions of effective practice for Pasifika learners and the Va'atele Framework as a model for Pasifika success were developed. The research also investigated how teachers improved their practice with Pasifika learners, supported by school leaders and facilitators. The study utilized a case methodology, underpinned by quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to answer the research questions. The first case illustrated shifts in one-year 5/6 teacher's practice, and the professional learning that facilitated improvement against two of the dimensions of effective practice for Pasifika learners. The second case was drawn from a subsequent research project undertaken with year 1–2 teachers. Teachers were supported to utilize bilingual approaches using Pasifika dual language books, which prompted a shift from monolingual to multilingual classrooms, and accelerated shifts in literacy."

Note: REL Pacific was unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, this resource may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding it through university or public library systems.

Vaish, V. (2019). Translanguaging pedagogy for simultaneous biliterates struggling to read in English. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 16(3), 286–301. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1221110>.

From the abstract: "This paper is about implementing a translanguaging approach to teach reading skills in English with simultaneous bilinguals who speak substantial amounts of Malay and Chinese at home. This new pedagogical approach was tried out with 2nd graders in 3 schools in Singapore: instead of the typical immersion approach to teaching reading skills in English, emergent simultaneous biliterates were offered translanguaging opportunities. The goal of this 'proof of concept' was to teach vocabulary, grammar and comprehension in English through systematic and judicious use of Chinese and Malay. 14 h of video data from 3 schools was coded for interactional patterns in which the teacher and students translanguaged. The focus of this paper is on qualitatively analyzing the teacher's pedagogical strategies and individual students'

responses. Translanguaging stimulated metalinguistic awareness which helped individual students notice nuances in punctuation, orthography, grammatical structures and meaning that had previously gone unnoticed. Finally this study revealed that while teaching simultaneous bilinguals/biliterates it is important for teacher training to highlight moments when translanguaging might not be required for learning the target language.”

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- "translanguaging" and "practices"
- "translanguaging" and "effectiveness"
- "translanguaging" and "Pacific students"
- "translanguaging" and "Pacific"
- "translanguaging" and "Pacific" and "practices"

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic databases Google Scholar and ProQuest.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 10 years. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online and publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for the practitioners who requested this Ask A REL.¹ Sources included in this document were last accessed in September 2019. Methodological priorities for the review and selection of the references were placed on randomized control trials and quasi experiments, specifically in the Pacific region, but due to the limited nature of these studies, REL Pacific expanded its considerations to include descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, and case studies in geographically or culturally similar contexts.

¹ This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.