An Investigation into the Effects of Translanguaging Practices in a Grade 11 Bilingual Classroom

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of translanguaging techniques in a bilingual classroom in Grade 11. This study was guided by three specific objectives: first, to explore the motivations behind translanguaging practices; second, to determine the impacts of translanguaging; and third, to identify the optimal time for translanguaging to occur during classes to capitalize on the phenomenon. To assist educators and students in resolving linguistic conflicts in their first and second language, the study was important because it raised awareness about the reasons, benefits, and when to employ translanguaging. Translanguaging is a process that expands knowledge beyond language(s) and involves the dynamic and functional integration of several languages and language variations. It pushes us towards linguistics of participation and away from system and speaker linguistics. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with six teachers selected from a population of thirty, and participant observations were conducted with forty-two learners. The study employed a qualitative research methodology to ascertain the views, attitudes, and sentiments of both educators and learners regarding the practice of translanguaging in a bilingual classroom. Participant observations and semi-structured interviews were the two methods employed to gather data. The data collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the study's findings, teachers use translanguaging to help students comprehend challenging educational texts and materials when teaching vocabulary, terminologies, and complicated phrases. The significance of this study is to help learners do well in English as a second language. The following suggestions were made. Because translanguaging aids students who have trouble understanding the subject matter and acquiring target language, it shouldn't be prohibited in schools. Additionally, translanguaging should only be employed when all other

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explanations have been exhausted, particularly when elucidating complex terms or terminologies.

Keywords: code–switching, mother tongue, multilingual, second language, translanguaging

Introduction

Language is essential to every society as it allows individuals to express ideas, share opinions and emotions, and expand their knowledge. English, being a global language, serves as a vital tool for communication and fulfilling personal and social needs. With the rise of linguistic globalisation, multilingualism has become increasingly common, and in multilingual communities, it is typical for speakers to alternate between languages to achieve effective communication. This interaction between languages is called translanguaging (Bhatti et al., 2018). Csillik and Golubeva (2020) define translanguaging as the use of various languages interchangeably to avoid linguistic obstacles and facilitate smooth verbal or written communication.

In the Namibian context, English is both a compulsory subject and the official language of instruction in schools and higher education. The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture introduced the Language in Education Policy (LEP) in 2003, requiring all schools, including public institutions, to implement English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 to Grade 12. However, many teachers still use Oshiwambo dialects during lessons, resulting in a classroom environment where both students and teachers frequently communicate in these local languages.

Statement of the Problem

In multilingual societies, it is common for speakers to switch between languages to overcome communication challenges or to express themselves more clearly (Bhatti et al., 2018). This practice is particularly common in Namibia's northern rural schools, where both educators and students often speak English as well as Oshiwambo dialects. For instance, some Grade 11 teachers are more comfortable teaching in their native Oshiwambo due to limited proficiency in English. Because both educators and learners share the same linguistic background, some believe that using English in the classroom is unnecessary. This mindset has contributed to challenges in English language learning and in students' L2 performance (Tabatabaei, 2020).

Despite English being the official medium of instruction in Namibian schools, the country continues to experience an underachievement rate in English as a second language, particularly at the Grade 11 level. According to studies learners in Grades 10 and 12 scored, on average, below 40% in English. The challenges persist despite the recent revision of Grade 11 English Second Language curriculum, negatively affecting learners' academic outcomes. This has serious implications for Grade 11 and 12 learners, especially those writing national exams, as poor performance in English prevents them from qualifying for admission to higher education institutions.

Research Objectives

This study primarily aimed to examine how translanguaging affects Grade 11 learners studying English as a Second Language. Several specific objectives are explored as follows:

- To examine the causes of translanguaging practices in the Grade 11 bilingual classroom
- To identify the effects of translanguaging on Grade 11 learners learning English as a second language
- To establish when to translanguage during lessons to benefit from the phenomenon.

Literature Review

Possible causes of translanguaging in a bilingual classroom

Ticheloven et al. (2021) note that recent research has emphasised both the motivations behind translanguaging and its impact on learners' academic progress. Several circumstances have been identified as contributing factors to the emergence of translanguaging, including the following:

Linguistic Ability

Many learners engage in translanguaging as a way to address language-related challenges, commonly described as a "lack of facility." This occurs when they cannot find suitable or equivalent terms in the second language that are comparable to those in their first language (Azlan & Narasuman, 2013). Similarly, translanguaging may happen when a language lacks certain terms altogether (Ticheloven et al., 2021). In essence, bilingual individuals resort to translanguage when they struggle to recall the correct

word or when the target language does not offer an exact term needed to continue the conversation.

Teaching Vocabulary

Mashinja and Mwanza (2025) found that Namibian teachers frequently use translanguaging to explain difficult concepts, clarify lesson instructions, and support learners who struggle to express themselves in English, this is supported by Ahmad (2009), who said that educators often translanguage if they recognise that the words used in textbooks are too advanced for learners to grasp. Continuing with such language would hinder students' understanding. Teachers may also resort to translanguaging after exhausting all other communication methods without success, prompting them to use language the students are more familiar with. In addition, teachers tend to use their native language when explaining difficult concepts such as grammar, unfamiliar vocabulary, or textbook material (Puspawati, 2018).

Classroom Management

According to Cook (2008), teachers often use every day or informal language when giving instructions or assigning tasks in class. Palsson (2016) notes that the use of the vernacular serves as a distinct form of communication in the classroom and is particularly effective for managing behaviour and maintaining discipline**.** Cook (2008) further explains that students tend to be more attentive and responsive when instructions are delivered in their native language. For example, students react more quickly to commands like "shut up" when spoken in their first language than when they hear the same thing in a second language**.**

Give Instructions

Chu (2019) described how educators use translanguaging during instruction and ongoing classroom activities, employing their native language to guide and reinforce their teaching methods. Additionally, speakers often translanguage to emphasise a point or ensure clarity. To guarantee that all students understand and follow the lesson, some teachers first speak in English and then repeat it in vernacular (Anderson, 2006, as cited in Azlan & Narasuman, 2013)**.**

Effects of Translanguaging on Learners Learning English as a Second Language

A few educators support using the mother tongue in the classroom,

viewing it as helpful, efficient, and a vital step that facilitates second language acquisition. However, others, particularly language teachers, oppose this practice, believing that relying on the first language can interfere with and hinder the acquisition of the second language (Nino, 2018). Therefore, the use of translanguaging should be carefully evaluated by weighing its pros and cons, while considering the perspectives of those who implement it in teaching (Cavusoglu & Bensen, 2013).

Positive Effects of Translanguaging

Improve Understanding of the Subject. Prilutskaya (2021) presents the concept of translanguaging as a conscious pedagogical approach that allows teachers to build up students' learning by making use of students' whole linguistic system. Likewise, Hamman-Ortiz et al. (2025) reported that teachers frequently engage in translanguaging to enhance understanding, explain difficult concepts, facilitate classroom discourse, and build more inclusive classroom environments for their multilingual learners to meaningfully participate. This is in line with Memory et al. (2018) who suggested that translanguaging can help students who have difficulties understanding lessons when they are taught only in English. Learners feel confident to ask questions in their mother tongue when English is difficult to understand. This also helps to reduce their levels of anxiety as they are able to communicate in a language that is familiar to them, particularly when they are unsure about communicating the message in English.

Furthermore, Ticheloven et al. (2021) report that learners find that translanguaging significantly aids their learning by helping them grasp complex aspects of the second language. It also facilitates translation between their native and target languages, enabling teachers to bridge gaps in learners' knowledge, provided it is used effectively and appropriately, as Sert (2005) emphasises, making it an essential instructional tool. Simasiku (2016) notes that translanguaging enhances both language acquisition and subject comprehension, resulting in improved academic performance and higher test scores.

Improve the Cognitive and Linguistic Knowledge of Learners. Nambisan (2014) emphasised the importance of students using both their mother tongue and the language they are learning to enhance their current language abilities and develop strong English-speaking skills. Similarly,

Rajedram (2019) noted that learning is most effective when students rely on a language, they are already familiar with to deepen their understanding. Supporting this view, Nino (2018) argued that a second language acts as a bridge for acquiring new knowledge, fostering an interdependent relationship between languages that supports language learning. This also suggests that the more proficient a learner is in their second language, the greater the potential for language transfer. Martin-Beltrán (2014) further pointed out that translanguaging creates and expands educational spaces, enabling learners to tap into their full linguistic abilities and utilise their multilingual skills as valuable learning resources.

Maximisation of Participation. Beres (2015) stated that translanguaging enables pupils to actively engage in classroom activities without being hindered by the imbalance in the languages involved. Park (as cited in Beres, 2015), explained that translanguaging gives learners the flexibility to select language elements that suit their needs in a given moment, allowing them to take part in learning situations they might otherwise be excluded from. This process not only boosts their confidence but also helps alleviate feelings of isolation. Garcia (2014) described translanguaging as a means of giving "voice to the voiceless." Arthur and Martin's (Stravou 2016) also highlighted that translanguaging encourages greater classroom engagement by helping typically quiet or passive students become more involved, interpret content, and engage with texts essential to achieving the lesson's goals.

Negative Effects of Translanguaging

Mokgwathi and Webb (2013) argued that translanguaging has a detrimental impact on how English and other topics are taught and learnt. They claim that students who engage in translanguaging fail to become proficient in the target language due to the constant blending of English and their mother tongue. Anyiendah (2017) supported this view, stating that frequent shifts between English and the native language by teachers limit students' opportunities to effectively practice English in other subject areas. Similarly, Tabatabaei (2020**)** asserted that using the first language in English classes reduces students' chances to develop their English skills, since classroom exposure to English becomes minimal. This implies that if the educators and the learners overuse the learners' home language, it may lead to lower level of sustained exposure to the language of instruction, which might hinder the growth of academic words and second language

proficiency (Hou et al., 2025).

Ticheloven et al. (2021) added that learners who already possess strong English abilities often perceive translanguaging as a hindrance and a source of interruption in their educational journey. According to their study, students believe translanguaging obstructs fluency and mastery of English. As a result, students struggle with vocabulary development and have difficulty expressing themselves in English, revealing what is described as "linguistic insufficiency." This limitation becomes evident in formal assessments like tests and exams, where translanguaging is not permitted, and responses must be written in English without teacher support. Hamid (2016) also argued for English-only instruction, emphasising that translanguaging does not support English language development and instead impedes second-language acquisition.

This issue has broader academic consequences, particularly for students who aim to pursue higher education. Poor English proficiency, linked to translanguaging practices, leads to low performance in English and sometimes results in university admission rejections (Mokgwathi & Webb, 2013). Furthermore, Ticheloven et al. (2021) observed that usage of the native language may distract students from focusing on English and lead to confusion. Although translanguaging is common in multilingual settings, especially among English language learners, many students find it disorienting. Translanguaging when giving instructions can leave students uncertain about which language to use, often making them overly reliant on both. Ticheloven et al. (2021) also contended that teachers who frequently use translanguaging may be perceived as lacking in English proficiency themselves, which negatively influences students' vocabulary growth and their ability to communicate effectively in English.

When to Use Translanguaging During Lessons

Regarding language classroom education, Namibia has a specific language policy named: "The Language in Education Policy (LEP)" from Grade 4 to 12, which says English should be used as a medium of teaching, with the exception of the first language (Mafurunga & Moremi, 2017). Translanguaging is not prohibited in the classroom, but it should be used whenever it is essential with a group of students in a specific context. For example, if a learner does not understand what the teacher is teaching, the teacher can explain it thoroughly to the learner in the language that she or

he understands. Similarly, if a learner is known to have learning difficulties or is a slow learner, a teacher can use translanguaging to ensure that the learning objectives are met. When a teacher is communicating complicated terms to students, such as vocabulary and grammar, translanguaging might be helpful. Furthermore, translanguaging can be used when teachers are instructing pupils to ensure that each student completely understands to avoid misinterpretation of information presented to them. Translanguaging should not be employed as a teaching strategy; rather, it should be viewed as a method of supporting learners in comprehending rather than a teaching technique. This is done to help students understand the content very well (Puspawati, 2018).

Memory et al. (2018) argued that translanguaging should be used at the end of a lesson, because it helps students remember what they learned and realise what they missed when the teacher was teaching. This should not be done word-for-word because it consumes time; instead, it should be done to highlight the most key elements of the lesson and provide clarity on the most challenging sections of the lesson.

Recent research suggests that the education system should create policy frameworks and teacher induction programmes that define how and when translanguaging can be suitably applied in multilingual classrooms. Structured policy guidance allows teachers to strategically employ translanguaging to enhance comprehension by learners and to keep English as the language of instruction (Mashinja & Mwanza, 2025). This helps bilingual education to be balanced between access to learning and learning English.

Theoretical Framework

Translanguaging was first introduced in the 1980s by Cen Williams and Daffydd Whittal during teacher training in North Wales (Lewis et al., 2012, as cited in Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). They originally used the Welsh term *trawsieithu* to describe practices where learners processed details in one language (e.g., English) and responded in a different language (e.g., Welsh). Later, the concept was translated into English by Baker and Wright (2001) and gained popularity under the term translanguaging.

Ticheloven (2021) noted that the term emerged partly in response to Welsh revitalisation efforts, where students often responded in English despite instruction being delivered in Welsh. Such mixed language

behaviour was also observed in other multilingual settings. Over time, linguists began to prefer translanguaging over terms like code-switching, arguing that it reflects the fluid and integrated use of languages rather than viewing them as separate systems.

Neokleus et al. (2020) define translanguaging as a classroom strategy that encourages the oral and written use of multiple languages, while Csillik and Golubeva (2020) describe it as the flexible use of other languages to avoid communication difficulties and promote understanding.

There are mixed opinions on translanguaging. Cen Williams believes it enhances learning by broadening linguistic resources, facilitating problem-solving, and breaking down language barriers (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). Translanguaging also empowers both teachers and learners by shifting classroom power dynamics and supporting comprehension and identity development.

However, critics like Anyiendah (2017) argue that using multiple languages in class may cause confusion and hinder cognitive development. Learners might struggle to determine which language to use and risk underachieving in English, particularly in academic settings. Mwinda and Van der Walt (2015) note that overreliance on translanguaging can contribute to poor performance in English, limiting access to higher education.

Despite these concerns, the study suggests that translanguaging can be effective if used judiciously. According to Puspawati (2018), it should be employed only, when necessary, such as explaining complex terms or supporting students with learning difficulties, to improve understanding and academic outcomes. Similarly, Memory et al. (2018) recommend using translanguaging strategically at the end of lessons to reinforce learning and identify gaps.

According to the study, translanguaging should be considered a technique rather than a teaching style as it does not permit educators to use their vernacular language whenever they choose to do so (Ahmad, 2009).

Research Methods

The study focused on Grade 11 learners at the school. The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling procedure to identify participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the

phenomenon under investigation (Creswell et al., 2011). This sampling was considered suitable for this study because it sought information from participants who teach Grade 11. These participants are directly involved in translanguaging practice, and they could provide relevant insights. The Head of the Languages Department and six teachers teaching Grade 11 participated in semi-structured interviews, while the entire cohort of 41 Grade 11 learners was observed as part of the participant observation process.

A qualitative method was used to gather data, utilising semistructured interviews and participant observation tools. The participant observation was conducted with all the grade 11 learners who were present during the observation period. The researcher attended the classroom and observed the interactions between teachers and learners. The observation checklist focused on the languages frequently used in English lessons, among other topics discussed in the classroom. The researcher used the checklist to record the observation process, capturing classroom events and learners' behaviour. The participant observation helped the researcher to gather firsthand evidence of translanguaging practice as it occurred in the classroom setting.

The data collected through interviews and participant observations were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was considered appropriate for this study since it provides a systematic and flexible approach for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns. The researcher transcribed all the interview recordings and organised the observation checklist and then the recurring ideas and patterns related to translanguaging practices were identified. Later, the researcher conducted an initial coding process and identified the meaningful parts. Codes were grouped together according to their characteristics and relationships. These categories were later examined to identify broader themes that speak to the research objectives.

Results

Causes of Translanguaging

Teaching Vocabulary

One of the major reasons teachers engaged in translanguaging was to explain vocabulary, unfamiliar terms, and complex sentence structures to the learners. All six teachers indicated that they frequently switched

between English and Oshiwambo when learners struggled to understand vocabulary used in textbooks or classroom explanations. Teachers explained that some concepts were too difficult to explain in English only, especially when learners had a limited English vocabulary. One participant stated that translanguaging helped learners understand and remember difficult words by connecting them to familiar meanings in Oshiwambo. Classroom observations supported this finding, as learners were observed switching to Oshiwambo whenever they lacked the English vocabulary needed to express themselves. During one observed lesson, a learner used the Oshiwambo word *owina* because she could not recal the English equivalent to describe peers who were intentionally making noise.

Table 1

Research Objective, Key Themes, Sub-Themes and Sample Empirical Quote

Research Objective	Key Theme	Sub-theme	Sample Empirical Quote
To examine the causes of translanguaging practices in the Grade 11 bilingual classroom	Causes of translanguaging	Teaching vocabulary	"We switch to Oshikwanyama when learners do not understand difficult words or complex sentences in English."
		Improving learner understanding and giving instructions	"I switch to Oshikwanyama to make sure learners grasp the content and the instruction thoroughly so they can perform well in assessments."
		Poor learner participation	"When questions are asked in English, learners remain quiet because they struggle to express themselves."
To identify the effects of translanguaging on Grade 11 learners learning English as a second language	Positive effects	Better understanding of subject matter	"We explain the parts learners find difficult to understand."
		Maximisation of learner participation	"Learners only actively participate when the discussion is in Oshikwanyama."

Research Objective	Key Theme	Sub-theme	Sample Empirical Quote
	Negative effects	Language mixing	"Some learners write Oshikwanyama words in English tasks because they think it is acceptable."
		Poor performance	"Both teachers and learners rely too much on the first language, so learners struggle to express themselves in English."
		Limited English vocabulary	"Learners do not know the meaning of some words such as conference, fragile and franchise unless they are translated."
To establish when translanguaging should be used during lessons to benefit from the phenomenon	Appropriate use of translanguaging	When learners do not understand concepts or instructions	"I switch to Oshikwanyama when learners do not understand what is expected of them or when the concept is too difficult to follow in English only."
		When learners are unable to participate	"If learners are not participating in the lesson I switch to Oshiwambo and ask them to say answers in Oshiwambo".
		Translanguaging should be used selectively and in moderation	"It must be used in moderation because too much use of Oshiwambo may affect learners' English development."

Improving Learner Understanding and Giving Instructions

Another cause of translanguaging was the need to improve learners' understanding of lesson content, and ensure that the instructions were clearly understood. Teachers reported that they often switched to

Oshiwambo when they noticed that learners were not following the lesson delivered in English. Translanguaging was therefore used as a support strategy to clarify subject matter and ensure that learners fully understood the content being taught. One participant explained that switching to Oshiwambo helped learners grasp the content thoroughly, enabling them to perform better in tests and examinations. This finding was also evident during classroom observations, where teachers were seen re-explaining concepts in Oshiwambo after learners failed to respond or showed signs of confusion when explanations were given in English alone. Furthermore, the data revealed that teachers translanguage when giving instructions and guiding classroom activities. Participants noted that learners often misunderstood activity instructions when these were communicated solely in English, especially in contexts where their English proficiency is limited. As a result, teachers repeated or clarify instructions in Oshiwambo to ensure that learners understood what was expected of them. In context, Translanguaging served as a procedural classroom function by helping teachers manage learning activities and avoid misunderstandings (Bista, 2010).

Poor Learner Participation

The last cause of translanguaging indentified in this study was poor learner participation during English-medium classroom interaction. Participants reported that learners tended to remain silent when questions were asked in English because they lacked confidence to respond in the language. Participant Four stated that learners often failed to participate during English discussions because they struggled to express themselves. Similarly, Participant Six explained that when only a few learners engage, she switched to Oshiwambo to re-explain the lesson and encouraged participation. Participant One also observed that learners participated more actively when the classroom discussion conducted in Oshiwambo rather than English. These responses were supported by classroom observations, which showed that learners were often passive and unresponsive during English-only interactions but engaged more when the teacher switched to Oshiwambo. Overall, the findings suggestthat translanguaging was not merely a spontaneous language practice but a strategic classroom response to learner's difficulty, limited English vocabulary, and low participation in English (Beres, 2015).

Effects of Translanguaging

Positive Effects

A Better Understanding of the Subject Matter. One of the most significant positive effects identified in this study was that translanguaging improved learners' understanding of the subject matter. Participants explained that learners often struggled to follow lesson content when it was presented exclusively in English, especially when technical terms, difficult vocabulary, or abstract concepts are involved. Translanguaging enabled teachers to explain such content in Oshiwambo allowing learners to understand what was being taught. Participant One indicated that teachers explained the concepts learners find difficult to understand by using the learners' mother tongue. Classroom observations supported this finding, as learners were observed asking questions in Oshiwambo when they could not formulate them in English, while teachers often responded in the same language to ensure comprehension. These findings suggest that translanguaging functions as a scaffold for meaning-making in the bilingual classroom (Bista 2010).

Maximise Learners' Participation. Another positive effect indentified in this study was that translanguaging increases learner participation during lessons. Teachers reported that many learners were reluctant to contribute in class when English was the only language used, largely because they feared making mistakes or lacked confidence in expressing themselves. However, when Oshiwambo was used alongside English, learners appeared more comfortable and willing to speak. Participant One stated that learners actively participated in class discussions when the language used is Oshiwambo, whereas many remain silent when required to respond in English. Classroom observations confirmed these findings. During English-only discussions, only a small number of learners contributed, while majority of the learners remained passive. In contrast, when translanguaging occurred, participants became more involved in answering questions, seeking clarification, and particpating in classroom discussion. These findings therefore indicated that translanguaging can create a more inclusive classroom environment by giving less proficient English learners a voice in the learning process (Beres, 2015).

Negative Effects of Translanguaging

Makes Learners Mix Languages and Causes Confusion. Despite its benefits, the findings also revealed several negative effects of translanguaging on learners' English language development. One negative effect identified was that translanguaging could lead to language mixing and confusion. All six participants indicated that learners sometimes became confused about which language to use, particularly in written tasks and classroom Interactions. Teachers explained that because they themselves switched between English and Oshiwambo during lessons, some learners assumed that the same practice is acceptable in formal schoolwork. Participant Three noted that learners sometimes wrote Oshiwambo words in assignments that were supposed to be completed in English. Classroom observations confirmed this pattern. For example, in one mathematics lesson, a learner asked a question using a mixed linguistc form that combined Oshiwambo prefix "*oka" to the* English *word* "graph" so it became *"okagraph"*. These findings suggest that translanguaging may blur language boundaries for learners and create uncertainty about what counts as acceptable academic English (Simasiku et.al., 2015).

Poor Performance. Another major negative effect identified was poor performance. Teachers expressed concern that excessive reliance on translanguaging may weaken learners' development of the four core language skills required for academic success in English, namely reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Participants explained that when both teachers and learners reply too heavily on Oshiwambo, learners are not getting enough opportunities to practice English meaningfully. Participant Three observed that learners struggle to express themselves in English because both teachers and learners rely too much on the first language. Observation data also showed that learners had difficulty answering questions or expressing their ideas in English without switching to Oshiwambo. These findings suggest that while translanguaging may support short-term understanding, excessive dependence on it may hinder sustained English language development and negatively affect learners' performance in assessments where only English is permitted (Mafurunga & Moremi, 2017).

Limited English Vocabulary. The last negative effect identified from the data was limited English vocabulary development. Teachers observed that learners often lacked the English vocabulary necessary to participate

fully in classroom learning. Some participants argued that translanguaging can support vocabulary learning when learners record new English words and their meanings in Oshiwambo. However, others maintained that translanguaging reduces learners' exposure to English and consequently slows the vocabulary development. Classroom observations strongly supported the latter view. Learners struggled to understand words such as *conference*, *fragile*, and *franchise*, and teachers had to explain these terms/words in Oshiwambo before learners could understand them. These findings indicate that translanguaging may become problematic when it replaces sustained English exposure rather than functioning as a temporary support mechanism (Ticheloven et al., 2021).

When to Use Translanguaging

When Learners do not Understand Concepts or Instructions

The most common view among participants was that translanguaging should be used when learners do not understand lesson content or instructions delivered in English. Teachers explained that there are occasions in the classroom when English-only explanations do not result in understanding, particularly when learners encounter unfamiliar concepts or when task instructions are misunderstood. In such situations, switching to Oshiwambo is considered a necessary strategy for preventing confusion and ensuring that learners can follow the lesson.

Participant One emphasised that translanguaging should be used when learners do not understand the concept being taught or the instructions given by the teacher. This was supported by classroom observations which showed that learners requested clarification in Oshiwambo after failing to understand explanations given in English. The findings therefore suggest that translanguaging is viewed by teachers as a pedagogical support mechanism to be used when communication breaks down (Puspawati, 2018).

When Learners are Unable to Participate

Another situation in which translanguaging is considered appropriate is when learners are unable to participate during classroom discussions. Teachers stated that if learners remain silent because they do not know how to respond in English, translanguaging can be used to help them express themselves and become involved in the lesson. In this regard, translanguaging serves as a participation-support strategy that enables

learners to communicate ideas that they may not yet be able to formulate in English.

Participants noted that translanguaging can be useful when learners hesitate to answer questions or avoid participating because of linguistic insecurity. By allowing the brief use of Oshiwambo, teachers can reduce anxiety, encourage responses, and gradually guide learners towards understanding and engagement with the content (Puspawati, 2018).

Translanguaging should be Used Selectively and in Moderation

Although participants recognised the value of translanguaging, they also stressed that it should not be used all the time. Most teachers argued that translanguaging should be applied selectively and only when necessary. Participant One maintained that translanguaging should not be prohibited, but it must be regulated to ensure that it serves its intended purpose of enhancing understanding of the learners. Participant Five was more cautious and suggested that Oshikwanyama should be limited as little as possible to avoid confusing learners and weakening their English proficiency.

These responses indicate that teachers do not view translanguaging as a replacement for English instruction, but rather as a strategic support mechanism that should be used under clearly defined circumstances. The findings, therefore, suggest that translanguaging is considered most beneficial when it is controlled, purposeful, and limited to moments of genuine linguistic need (Ticheloven et al., 2021).

Discussion

Causes of Translanguaging

The study found that translanguaging occurred for only Four reasons: to teach difficult vocabulary, to improve learner understanding, to give instructions more effectively, and to address poor learner participation during lessons. These findings suggest that translanguaging is not a random language alternation, but a pedagogical strategy used to manage meaning and participation in multilingual classrooms. In this study, teachers used translanguaging mainly as a response to learners' low English proficiency and their inability to comprehend the lesson content through English.

This study demonstrates that translanguaging is strongly tied to assessment pressure and teacher accountability. Teachers do not only switch languages because they prefer Oshiwambo, but they do so to ensure that

learners understood the lesson content and performed well in their assessments. This also shows that translanguaging may function as an assessment survival strategy in an underperforming English as a Second Language classroom.

The findings show that learners being passive during the English lessons is the key driver of translanguaging. In this respect, the study shows that translanguaging is used both to explain the content and to reactivate learner participation when English is suppresses the classroom engagement. This is crucial because it positions translanguaging as both a linguistic and an interactional tool.

Effects of Translanguaging

The findings show that translanguaging has both positive and negative effects on the learners learning English as a Second Language. On the positive side, it improves comprehension of the subject matter and help learners to carry out the instructions well, and improves participation during classroom discussions; on the negative side, it may encourage language mixing, weaken English performance, and limit vocabulary development when overused. This confirms that translanguaging in bilingual classrooms are niether beneficial nor harmful

In this study, translanguaging allowed learners to understand challenging content, ask questions and participate actively in lessons. This was used in the context where usage of English did not enable them engage in the discussion. The findings support the use of the mother tongue, which functions as a scaffold for conceptualisation.

However, there are negative findings regarding translanguaging which show that it may incourage overdependence on the mother tongue and may carry significant risk. Learners in this study use English as a medium of instruction, but if translanguaging becomes dominant mode of communication rather than a strategic support mechanism, it may also reduce learners' opportunities to develop fluency and perform well in English.

When to Use Translanguaging

The study found that teachers prefer to use translanguaging intentionally rather than allowing languages to mix randomly. Translanguaging is suitable when learners do not or failed to comprehend concepts or

instructions, when the vocabulary or content needs explanation, and when learners are not actively participating in lessons. This suggests that teachers should not replace English with translanguaging but use it as a support instrument to be used under specific teaching and learning conditions.

This finding contributes to bilingual education debates by offering a balanced model of classroom translanguaging. Instead of banning translanguaging, this study suggests it should be regulated and used when understanding, participation conceptual clarity breaks down, since English is not yet fully accessible to all learners, but English should remain the primary language of instruction.

The findings, therefore, suggest that translanguaging in the Namibian school context should be conceptualised as a pedagogical bridge rather than a pedagogical substitute. Its purpose should be to move learners toward fuller engagement with English, not away from it. This distinction is crucial for policy and classroom practice, because it allows teachers to support learners' understanding without abandoning their long-term goal of English language development.

Conclusions

This study examined the causes, effects, and appropriate use of translanguaging in a Grade 11 bilingual classroom in northern Namibia. The findings show that translanguaging helps learners understand difficult vocabulary, instructions, and concepts, and supports participation. However, excessive use may lead to language mixing and weaker English development. Translanguaging should therefore be used selectively and in moderation. The study recommends that: (1) English Second Language guidance should include clear direction on when translanguaging may be used to support understanding without reducing English exposure. (2) Learning materials should include glossaries, vocabulary support, and scaffolded activities to help learners move from Oshiwambo supported understanding to English use. (3) There should be a clear classroom language guidelines and teacher training are needed to support the responsible use of translanguaging in multilingual schools. Overall, translanguaging should be recognised as a useful but controlled teaching strategy that supports both learner understanding and long-term English proficiency.

Author Contribution

Maria Hashoongo: conceptualization, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, writing – original draft. **Niklaas Fredricks:** methodology, resources, supervision, writing – review & editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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