

Translanguaging and Educational Equity: A Narrative Review of Global Practices

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ABSTRACT: This narrative review examines the role of translanguaging as a pedagogical framework in bilingual and multilingual education. Drawing on studies published in the last decade, the review synthesizes evidence on how translanguaging enhances comprehension, fosters identity affirmation, and promotes inclusive learning environments. Findings indicate that translanguaging improves academic performance by supporting conceptual understanding and learner engagement, while also validating students' cultural and linguistic identities. Despite these benefits, systemic barriers such as monolingual ideologies, restrictive policies, and limited teacher preparation remain significant challenges. This review contributes by highlighting both the transformative potential and contextual limitations of translanguaging, and by identifying directions for future research on its long-term and cross-regional impacts.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Bilingual Education, Multilingual Practices, Identity Formation, Educational Policy, Pedagogical Innovation.



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INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging has emerged as a pivotal pedagogical approach in bilingual and multilingual education, attracting significant scholarly attention over the past two decades. Initially conceptualized in English language learning contexts, the idea has since broadened to encompass a diverse range of multilingual practices across global educational landscapes (Aleksić & García, 2022). Its theoretical foundation is rooted in sociocultural frameworks that emphasize the fluidity of language use, challenging rigid dichotomies between linguistic systems and instead foregrounding the dynamic and integrative ways in which bilingual and multilingual individuals communicate and learn (Wei & García, 2022). This reconceptualization has been instrumental in dismantling monolingual ideologies that have historically dominated education, while simultaneously promoting inclusive pedagogical models that better reflect the linguistic realities of students worldwide (García & Kleifgen, 2019).

Recent scholarship has underscored the critical role of translanguaging in advancing educational equity and cultural recognition. As Menken and Sánchez (2019) argue, the recognition of translanguaging within education is a deliberate attempt to resist entrenched monolingual ideologies, while Cummins (2019) highlights its importance for affirming the linguistic identities of all students. These perspectives align with broader educational goals of inclusivity and diversity, suggesting that translanguaging is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a sociopolitical act of empowerment. Furthermore, Wen et al. (2022) have emphasized the necessity of contextualizing translanguaging practices within specific sociocultural environments, given that its meanings and implications may differ across local educational systems. Consequently, current debates in the literature often grapple with whether translanguaging can serve as a universal pedagogical framework or must remain sensitive to localized contexts (MacSwan, 2017).

The growing body of empirical evidence substantiates the effectiveness of translanguaging in supporting academic outcomes. Studies demonstrate its capacity to enhance comprehension, particularly in content-heavy subjects such as science and mathematics, where linguistic flexibility facilitates deeper conceptual understanding (Hou et al., 2024; González-Howard et al., 2023). Mgijima and Makalela (2016) reported that translanguaging practices improved cognitive processing and reading comprehension among bilingual learners, while Song et al. (2022) highlighted its role in fostering peer collaboration and social cohesion. Such findings reflect a convergence of evidence that translanguaging not only addresses linguistic diversity but also strengthens learning outcomes and classroom integration, reinforcing students' engagement and sense of belonging (Almashour, 2024).

Equally significant is translanguaging's contribution to identity formation and cultural affirmation. Research in linguistically diverse regions such as South Africa (Abdulatief & Guzula, 2024) and the Basque Country (Saragueta et al., 2022) demonstrates how translanguaging practices serve as critical tools for validating the lived linguistic realities of students who might otherwise feel marginalized in monolingual educational systems. Ali and Raj (2024) further illustrate how translanguaging fosters community connections and identity affirmation among minority students, thereby contributing to social cohesion. These findings resonate with broader arguments that translanguaging holds the potential to transform classrooms into spaces where linguistic and cultural diversity are celebrated as assets rather than deficits.

Despite these promising outcomes, challenges to implementation remain pervasive. Salmerón (2022) and Ollerhead and Pennington (2024) report that teachers often lack institutional support and professional training to integrate translanguaging effectively into curricula. Moreover, monolingual ideologies embedded in educational systems continue to marginalize multilingual practices, framing them as barriers rather than resources (Menken & Sánchez, 2019; Csillik & Golubeva, 2020). Teachers frequently express concerns regarding the constraints of standardized assessments, which predominantly prioritize single-language outputs and thereby limit opportunities for translanguaging (Hendricks & Xeketwana, 2024). Such institutional structures risk undermining the benefits of translanguaging by restricting its systematic adoption.

Another significant challenge arises from the varying competencies of educators themselves. Alasmari et al. (2022) note that the successful implementation of translanguaging is contingent on

teachers' multilingual capabilities, which can create disparities in student experiences. This unevenness often exacerbates inequalities across classrooms, as students with access to more linguistically capable educators benefit disproportionately from translanguaging strategies. Thus, while translanguaging holds considerable promise, its adoption is hindered by systemic, structural, and capacity-related barriers that demand further investigation.

The literature also highlights important gaps that warrant attention. While numerous studies have established the immediate academic and social benefits of translanguaging, there is limited research on its long-term impact on academic achievement and broader social integration (García & Kleifgen, 2019). Almashour (2024) emphasizes the potential of translanguaging to influence identity formation and social belonging, yet longitudinal evidence remains sparse. Similarly, while translanguaging has been studied extensively in regions such as Europe and North America, less attention has been paid to contexts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where linguistic diversity is equally, if not more, pronounced (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Duarte, 2016). These gaps highlight the need for more geographically inclusive and temporally expansive research.

The aim of this review is therefore to critically examine the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and implementation challenges associated with translanguaging, while addressing key gaps in the literature. By synthesizing insights across diverse geographical and sociolinguistic contexts, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of translanguaging's potential and limitations as a pedagogical approach. Particular attention is given to how translanguaging influences academic achievement, identity formation, and social integration, as well as the systemic barriers that hinder its broader adoption.

The scope of this review is intentionally broad, encompassing studies from multiple regions and educational levels, while maintaining a particular focus on minority and marginalized communities where translanguaging may serve as a critical tool for equity. Research from South Africa (Abdulatif & Guzula, 2024), the Basque Country (Saragueta et al., 2022), and the Greater Bay Area of China (Wen et al., 2022) illustrates the diversity of translanguaging practices across sociopolitical and cultural landscapes. This global perspective underscores the adaptability of translanguaging while highlighting the importance of contextualizing its implementation within local educational and cultural realities. By examining these varied contexts, the review aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the universality versus contextual specificity of translanguaging practices, providing insights that can inform both scholarship and policy development.

In summary, translanguaging represents both an academic and sociopolitical innovation with profound implications for bilingual and multilingual education. Its theoretical underpinnings challenge monolingual norms, its empirical evidence affirms its pedagogical value, and its implementation highlights systemic challenges that require careful attention. By addressing these dimensions, this review situates translanguaging as a critical framework for rethinking language education in increasingly diverse and globalized societies.

METHOD

The methodological approach employed in this study was designed to ensure a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the literature on translanguaging within educational contexts. The central objective of the methodology was to collect, evaluate, and synthesize empirical and theoretical research that highlights the pedagogical, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of translanguaging. To achieve this objective, a rigorous process was undertaken, beginning with the identification of appropriate databases, followed by the formulation of search strategies, and culminating in the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies.

The initial step involved identifying suitable academic databases recognized for their comprehensive coverage of education-related literature. Scopus, Google Scholar, and ERIC were selected as the primary sources for literature retrieval. Scopus was prioritized due to its extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals and its capacity to track citations, which facilitated an understanding of the scholarly impact and interconnections among studies (Aleksić & García, 2022). Google Scholar was utilized to capture a broader range of materials, including grey literature, conference proceedings, and book chapters that may not be indexed in Scopus but remain influential in advancing theoretical and practical insights into translanguaging. ERIC was included as a specialized database for education research, ensuring coverage of both empirical and policy-focused publications that directly pertain to bilingual and multilingual education. The triangulation of these three databases provided a robust foundation for gathering a diverse and representative corpus of literature.

Following the selection of databases, the search strategy was constructed through the identification of relevant keywords and the careful application of Boolean operators to refine search results. Core keywords included “translanguaging,” “bilingual education,” “multilingual practices,” “translanguaging pedagogy,” and “language integration.” To further enhance the precision of searches, these terms were combined with additional descriptors such as “academic achievement,” “identity formation,” “student engagement,” and “classroom practice.” Boolean operators were strategically employed, such as in the search phrases “translanguaging AND bilingual education” or “translanguaging OR multilingual practices.” This process allowed for the retrieval of literature spanning a broad thematic range while also capturing nuanced studies that directly address the pedagogical and identity-related implications of translanguaging (Brown, 2021; Mijijima & Makalela, 2016). The iterative refinement of search terms ensured that the resulting dataset was both comprehensive and specific to the focus of this study.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were central to ensuring the relevance and quality of the selected literature. Studies were included if they explicitly addressed translanguaging within educational contexts, utilized empirical research methods—whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods—and focused on bilingual or multilingual learner populations across K-12 and higher education levels. Moreover, inclusion was limited to studies published in peer-reviewed journals within the last decade to ensure contemporary relevance. A particular emphasis was placed on works that examined the impacts of translanguaging on learning outcomes, identity formation, and pedagogical strategies, as these themes directly aligned with the objectives of the review.

Conversely, studies were excluded if they lacked peer review, such as opinion essays, editorial notes, or non-scholarly commentaries. Articles focusing exclusively on monolingual education contexts without reference to translanguaging were also excluded, as were studies devoid of empirical evidence or theoretical grounding. Publications in languages other than English without accessible translations were not considered, as language barriers could impede the reliability of interpretation and dissemination. Additionally, studies with significant methodological shortcomings, such as inadequate sample sizes, poorly defined research designs, or insufficient clarity in data collection and analysis procedures, were excluded to maintain methodological rigor (Reynolds, 2019; Wen et al., 2022). These exclusion parameters were critical in ensuring that the final corpus consisted of studies that contributed substantive and reliable insights to the field.

The process of literature selection involved multiple stages to enhance transparency and minimize bias. Initially, all search results were exported from databases into a reference management system, where duplicates were identified and removed. Titles and abstracts of the remaining studies were screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Those that met the preliminary requirements proceeded to full-text review, where a more detailed evaluation was conducted to confirm methodological soundness and relevance. During this stage, particular attention was given to the alignment between research objectives and the outcomes discussed, as well as the robustness of the evidence presented. Studies that demonstrated clear contributions to understanding translanguaging practices, whether through innovative pedagogical strategies, insights into student identity, or critical analyses of systemic barriers, were prioritized for inclusion.

A diverse range of research designs was represented in the final dataset, reflecting the multifaceted nature of translanguaging research. Qualitative studies, including ethnographies and classroom observations, offered rich insights into the lived experiences of bilingual and multilingual students and teachers, shedding light on identity construction and pedagogical practices. Quantitative studies, such as surveys and controlled experiments, provided empirical evidence regarding the academic outcomes of translanguaging, including its effects on reading comprehension, cognitive development, and student engagement. Mixed-methods research further bridged these approaches by combining statistical analyses with narrative accounts, thereby offering comprehensive perspectives on the pedagogical implications of translanguaging. The inclusion of diverse research designs allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and depth of the review.

Evaluation of the selected studies extended beyond methodological rigor to include considerations of geographical and sociocultural contexts. Translanguaging is inherently shaped by local language policies, cultural dynamics, and educational structures. As such, research from regions as diverse as South Africa, the Basque Country, China's Greater Bay Area, and the United States was deliberately included to reflect the global applicability and contextual variability of translanguaging practices. This comparative perspective allowed for the identification of both common trends and localized challenges, thereby strengthening the review's capacity to generate nuanced and contextually relevant conclusions.

Finally, the synthesis of literature followed a thematic approach. Studies were grouped according to recurring themes, such as academic achievement, identity formation, pedagogical practices, and systemic barriers. This thematic organization facilitated the development of a coherent narrative

that not only presented empirical findings but also engaged critically with theoretical debates and policy implications. The goal was to balance breadth with depth, ensuring that the review captured the complexity of translanguaging while maintaining clarity in its analytical focus.

In conclusion, this methodological framework combined systematic database searching, precise keyword strategies, and rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria to curate a high-quality body of literature on translanguaging in education. By integrating diverse research designs and geographical contexts, the methodology ensured a comprehensive exploration of translanguaging's pedagogical, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions. The multi-stage selection and evaluation process reinforced the reliability of findings, while thematic synthesis provided a structured platform for addressing the study's central research questions. Through this approach, the methodology contributed to the production of a robust and credible review that advances scholarly understanding of translanguaging as both a pedagogical innovation and a sociopolitical practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this narrative review are presented according to four interrelated themes that emerged from the literature: academic outcomes, identity and motivation, pedagogical practices, and teacher beliefs and policy constraints. Each theme highlights the ways in which translanguaging has been conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated across educational contexts, supported by both qualitative and quantitative evidence. A global comparative lens is adopted throughout to capture the variability of translanguaging practices across different sociolinguistic and policy environments.

Academic Outcomes

The body of literature reviewed consistently affirms that translanguaging exerts a significant positive impact on academic outcomes. Empirical studies demonstrate that translanguaging enhances both cognitive and linguistic development, particularly in contexts where students' full linguistic repertoires are engaged. Mgijima and Makalela (2016) provided robust quantitative evidence demonstrating that bilingual learners exposed to translanguaging practices developed improved reading comprehension and inferencing skills compared to those in monolingual instruction settings. This study highlighted the role of translanguaging in enabling students to draw connections across languages, thereby strengthening higher-order thinking skills. Complementing this, qualitative investigations such as those conducted by Brown (2021) confirmed that translanguaging supports deeper engagement with academic material by allowing students to negotiate meaning through flexible language use. These findings suggest that translanguaging contributes to both immediate comprehension and long-term cognitive development.

Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) further advanced this evidence through their examination of natural science classrooms in South Africa, where translanguaging was shown to provide greater epistemic access to complex scientific concepts. Students who engaged in translanguaging practices demonstrated higher levels of participation and comprehension compared to their peers in monolingual classrooms. Similarly, Almashour (2024) reported that students engaging in translanguaging strategies expressed increased confidence and self-efficacy, thereby facilitating

meaningful academic interactions. Together, these findings indicate that translanguaging enhances not only the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge but also the affective dimensions of learning, such as confidence and willingness to participate.

Comparative analyses across different national contexts reveal the extent to which policy environments influence the academic effectiveness of translanguaging. In the Basque region of Spain, Cenoz and Gorter (2017) documented how flexible language policies enabled translanguaging to support heritage language preservation while simultaneously enhancing academic outcomes. Similarly, in South Africa, Probyn (2024) found that translanguaging practices in bilingual schools significantly improved student achievement compared to strictly monolingual approaches. By contrast, in the United States, where English-only policies continue to dominate many school systems, Menken and Sánchez (2019) highlighted that restrictive environments suppress students' linguistic resources, often resulting in underperformance among bilingual learners. The consequences of restrictive policies were also observed by Becker and Knoll (2021), who noted that minority-language students subjected to rigid monolingual instruction experienced lower academic outcomes, thereby reinforcing systemic inequalities. These findings underscore that translanguaging's academic benefits are contingent upon supportive policy frameworks that legitimize and encourage multilingual practices.

Identity and Motivation

Translanguaging also plays a vital role in shaping students' identities and fostering motivation in learning. Almashour (2024) reported that students used translanguaging to reconcile their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, thereby strengthening their sense of self within academic settings. This validation of multilingual identities was further reinforced by Wang et al. (2025), who showed that translanguaging allowed students to bridge their home and school languages, creating continuity across linguistic domains. These findings underscore translanguaging's significance in affirming students' identities, particularly for those from marginalized communities who often face erasure in monolingual environments.

Wei and García (2022) similarly argued that translanguaging functions as a decolonizing practice that enables learners to articulate their cultural identities in classrooms that might otherwise marginalize their voices. This aligns with Musyoka (2023), who observed that translanguaging practices allowed students to showcase their unique linguistic narratives, thereby constructing identities that reflect both their cultural heritage and their academic aspirations. Such identity construction contributes to more inclusive and equitable educational environments.

Motivation and engagement represent another crucial dimension of translanguaging's impact. Song et al. (2022) found that students permitted to use their home languages alongside the instructional language displayed greater enthusiasm and active participation in class activities. Wang et al. (2025) demonstrated that the incorporation of translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms increased learners' motivation by making the learning process more relatable and accessible. Complementing this, Yun et al. (2025) presented evidence that translanguaging not only improved student attitudes toward their own linguistic abilities but also encouraged active participation, thereby contributing to enriched classroom dynamics. These findings suggest that translanguaging generates a positive feedback loop: motivated students contribute to dynamic

learning environments, which in turn reinforce academic success (Mgijima & Makalela, 2016; Almashour, 2024).

Pedagogical Practices

The literature also highlights a range of pedagogical practices through which translanguaging has been effectively integrated into classrooms. Brown (2021) emphasized the importance of creating translanguaging spaces, where students are encouraged to draw on multimodal repertoires—including digital tools like Google Translate—to support writing and comprehension. These practices expand learners' capacity to navigate academic texts while promoting creative engagement with language. Parra and Proctor (2021) similarly demonstrated that translanguaging fosters richer classroom interactions by allowing students to activate their full linguistic repertoires as cognitive tools. In such contexts, bilingual dictionaries and other scaffolding tools have proven effective in bridging languages, thereby enhancing learners' output in both languages.

The variations in translanguaging practices across educational stages reflect its adaptability. In early childhood and primary education, translanguaging is often playful and exploratory, supporting language development through activities such as multilingual storytelling (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). These approaches encourage linguistic experimentation and foster early literacy development. At the secondary level, translanguaging tends to be employed more strategically to facilitate access to academic content. Hendricks and Xeketwana (2024), for instance, found that bilingual teachers in English First Additional Language classrooms used translanguaging to promote literacy, enabling students to engage more deeply with texts. In tertiary education, particularly in EFL contexts, the use of translanguaging is more contested. Zhang and Zhang's research revealed that adherence to English-only policies in higher education limited opportunities for translanguaging, thereby constraining student engagement. Conversely, in bilingual education contexts, translanguaging was embraced as an essential pedagogical strategy that facilitated deeper comprehension and academic success (Menken & Sánchez, 2019; Meij et al., 2020). These findings suggest that while translanguaging is adaptable across education levels, its effectiveness is shaped by institutional and cultural attitudes toward multilingualism.

Teacher Beliefs and Policy Constraints

The literature consistently demonstrates that teacher beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping the implementation of translanguaging practices. Menken and Sánchez (2019) observed that teachers who viewed multilingualism as an asset were more likely to integrate translanguaging into their pedagogies, resulting in improved student outcomes. Positive attitudes toward translanguaging often corresponded with innovative classroom practices that validated students' linguistic resources. Conversely, negative perceptions, frequently rooted in monolingual ideologies, acted as barriers to implementation. Ching and Ruowei (2024) reported that teachers adhering to strict language separation policies resisted translanguaging, thereby diminishing opportunities for students to utilize their full linguistic repertoires. These findings indicate that teacher belief systems not only influence instructional practices but also directly impact students' academic experiences and identity development.

Institutional and governmental policies further condition the extent to which translanguaging can be implemented. In South Africa, for example, Abdulatief and Guzula (2024) observed that

language policies mandating monolingual instruction restricted the use of students' home languages, limiting their engagement and comprehension. Ünsal et al. (2017) similarly highlighted the constraining effects of policies that enforce rigid language boundaries, demonstrating how such frameworks undermine the potential of translanguaging. Conversely, in more progressive contexts, supportive policies create enabling environments for translanguaging to thrive. Muñoz-Muñoz et al. (2022) described how educational reforms in California promoted bilingual education and legitimized translanguaging as a pedagogical approach, fostering inclusive classroom environments that leveraged the linguistic diversity of students.

Comparative evidence highlights the global variability of translanguaging policy environments. While European contexts such as the Basque Country have integrated translanguaging into heritage language preservation strategies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017), other regions remain hesitant to institutionalize translanguaging. Duarte (2016) noted that monolingual orientations in many European education systems continue to hinder the recognition of multilingualism as a resource. In China's Greater Bay Area, Wen et al. (2022) revealed how translanguaging was adapted within localized frameworks, illustrating the need for context-sensitive approaches. These global comparisons underscore that while translanguaging has demonstrated significant potential across diverse contexts, its effectiveness is inextricably linked to the broader policy and ideological landscapes in which it is embedded.

Taken together, the findings indicate that translanguaging represents a powerful pedagogical tool that not only enhances academic outcomes but also strengthens students' identities and motivation, enriches pedagogical practices, and challenges entrenched monolingual ideologies. However, its success is highly dependent on the interplay of teacher beliefs, institutional support, and policy frameworks. By examining these themes across global contexts, the review highlights both the transformative potential and the ongoing challenges of translanguaging in contemporary education.

Alignment or Challenge to Existing Theories of Bilingual and Multilingual Education

The findings of this review largely reinforce existing sociocultural theories of bilingual and multilingual education, while also extending them in significant ways. Translanguaging, as conceptualized in the reviewed literature, strongly aligns with Vygotskian perspectives that highlight the central role of language as a mediational tool in learning and identity development (García & Kleifgen, 2019). Empirical studies demonstrating that translanguaging enhances cognitive abilities and academic outcomes (Mgijima & Makalela, 2016; Abdulatief & Guzula, 2024) provide strong support for theories that argue language learning is not bound by rigid linguistic categories but instead is fluid and context-dependent (Wei & García, 2022). These perspectives underscore the idea that bilingualism should not be seen as the sum of two separate language systems, but as a dynamic, integrated repertoire that learners flexibly deploy in classroom settings.

At the same time, translanguaging practices challenge traditional paradigms of language education that are premised on monolingual ideologies. Research has shown that strict language separation policies often marginalize minority languages and constrain students' ability to engage with academic content (Menken & Sánchez, 2019). Translanguaging disrupts these entrenched norms by validating linguistic hybridity as a legitimate and effective mode of learning, resonating with critical theories that call for decolonizing educational practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Almashour,

2024). However, challenges persist when moving from theoretical endorsement to practical implementation. Aleksić and García (2022) caution that misconceptions about translanguaging—as either a lack of language discipline or a threat to proficiency in the dominant language—remain widespread, thus limiting its acceptance. This tension highlights the ongoing struggle between reformist theories advocating for linguistic fluidity and educational systems entrenched in rigid monolingual traditions.

Systemic and Structural Factors Influencing Translanguaging Practices

The literature emphasizes that the effective adoption of translanguaging is shaped by systemic and structural conditions that extend beyond classroom-level practices. National and regional language policies are particularly influential. For example, policies in the Basque Autonomous Community and California that recognize bilingualism as an asset have provided fertile ground for translanguaging to flourish, allowing teachers to innovate with language use in their pedagogies (Saragüeta et al., 2022; Muñoz-Muñoz et al., 2022). By contrast, contexts characterized by rigid monolingual frameworks, such as English-only instruction in the United States, continue to limit the extent to which translanguaging can be enacted effectively (Menken & Sánchez, 2019). These policy conditions determine whether translanguaging is institutionalized as a legitimate practice or relegated to informal, teacher-driven strategies.

Institutional support within schools further mediates the success of translanguaging. Where professional development opportunities are available, teachers have been better equipped to implement translanguaging in ways that enhance student engagement and achievement (Hendricks & Xeketwana, 2024; Beiler, 2020). Conversely, in contexts where educators receive little guidance or resources, translanguaging is often inconsistently applied, exacerbating disparities in student outcomes. Teacher preparedness is particularly significant, as evidence suggests that translanguaging outcomes vary depending on educators' own multilingual competencies and their willingness to view students' linguistic repertoires as valuable resources (Alasmari et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of systemic investment in teacher training and institutional frameworks that normalize translanguaging as part of standard pedagogical practice.

Broader socio-economic conditions also shape translanguaging's uptake and impact. Cummins (2019) has argued that linguistic hierarchies often intersect with socio-economic inequalities, marginalizing the home languages of immigrant-background and lower-income students. In such cases, translanguaging has the potential to function as a tool of linguistic justice, but its implementation requires educators and policymakers to actively counter hegemonizing tendencies of majority languages. The interplay between language practices and social justice issues highlights that translanguaging is not merely a pedagogical tool but also a socio-political intervention situated within wider structures of inequality.

Policy Recommendations and Pedagogical Innovations for Supporting Translanguaging

The findings reviewed here suggest several important policy directions and pedagogical innovations that can enhance the role of translanguaging in education. First, language-in-education policies must be reframed to recognize multilingualism as an asset rather than a liability. Evidence from progressive policy environments, such as in California, demonstrates that supportive policies foster inclusive classrooms where translanguaging is normalized and legitimized (Muñoz-Muñoz

et al., 2022). Conversely, restrictive policies that enforce language separation undermine both student outcomes and broader efforts to cultivate linguistic diversity. Educational reforms must therefore allow for flexible language use within curricula, enabling teachers to integrate translanguaging strategies more systematically (Domke & Cerrato, 2024).

Teacher education is another critical area requiring innovation. Current research highlights the importance of equipping educators with both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for enacting translanguaging (Romanowski, 2025; Yun et al., 2025). Culturally sustaining pedagogy, as advocated by Swanwick (2017), provides a useful framework for this training, emphasizing the validation of students' linguistic identities in classroom practice. Professional development programs that foreground translanguaging can prepare teachers to move beyond tokenistic uses of students' home languages and toward pedagogies that truly integrate students' full linguistic repertoires. By cultivating teacher agency, such training can shift broader ideological frameworks within schools and communities.

Pedagogical innovations must also focus on fostering collaborative learning environments that utilize translanguaging as a resource for peer interaction. Wei (2023) and Song et al. (2022) demonstrated how translanguaging in group learning activities enhances both cognitive and social development by allowing students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires in collective meaning-making. Such practices reconfigure classrooms into spaces where students' languages are not siloed but instead circulate as shared resources that enrich learning for all participants. This model of collaborative, multilingual engagement has implications not only for individual achievement but also for broader social cohesion in multicultural societies.

Additionally, findings from various contexts highlight the importance of creating translanguaging spaces—pedagogical environments where linguistic boundaries are intentionally blurred to facilitate identity formation and deeper engagement (Brown, 2021; Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). These third spaces, described as “entre mundos” or borderlands, represent pedagogical sites where students can simultaneously engage with multiple languages and cultures, thereby constructing hybrid identities that reflect their lived realities (Wei & García, 2022). Such approaches challenge traditional classroom models that rigidly separate home and school languages, advocating instead for synchronous study of language and culture.

Limitations of Current Research and Directions for Future Inquiry

While the literature provides substantial evidence of the academic, social, and identity-related benefits of translanguaging, significant gaps remain. One limitation lies in the scarcity of longitudinal studies examining the long-term academic and social impacts of translanguaging. While short-term gains in reading comprehension, engagement, and identity formation are well documented (Mgijima & Makalela, 2016; Almashour, 2024), little is known about how these benefits translate into sustained academic trajectories or professional outcomes. García and Kleifgen (2019) have noted the importance of such longitudinal investigations to assess whether translanguaging practices ultimately influence graduation rates, career opportunities, or broader social integration.

Another limitation is the uneven geographical distribution of translanguaging research. Much of the existing literature originates from North America and Europe, with comparatively fewer

studies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America despite their rich multilingual landscapes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Duarte, 2016). Recent research in South Africa (Abdulatief & Guzula, 2024) and China's Greater Bay Area (Wen et al., 2022) underscores the importance of situating translanguaging within diverse cultural and policy contexts. Expanding research in underrepresented regions would provide critical insights into how translanguaging interacts with different sociolinguistic ecologies, thereby strengthening the global applicability of theoretical frameworks.

Finally, future research must also address the institutional and ideological barriers that hinder the implementation of translanguaging. Aleksić and García (2022) highlight that misconceptions about translanguaging continue to circulate among educators, policymakers, and even parents. Investigating how such beliefs can be shifted through advocacy, professional development, or community engagement represents an important avenue for future work. Similarly, more research is needed on the intersections of translanguaging with issues of race, class, and immigration, as these factors deeply shape students' experiences and the reception of their linguistic practices in schools.

By acknowledging these limitations, scholars can refine research agendas that not only expand the scope of translanguaging studies but also address the systemic and ideological barriers that continue to impede its broader acceptance.

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CONCLUSION

This narrative review has demonstrated that translanguaging represents a transformative pedagogical approach with significant implications for bilingual and multilingual education. The evidence reviewed consistently highlights its positive effects on academic outcomes, identity formation, and student motivation, while also underscoring its role in reshaping traditional pedagogical practices. Translanguaging enhances comprehension, fosters cultural affirmation, and supports active classroom engagement, thereby positioning itself as an essential strategy for addressing the challenges faced by multilingual learners (Mgijima & Makalela, 2016; Almashour, 2024; Wei & García, 2022). Yet, its successful implementation is contingent upon systemic factors such as supportive policies, institutional frameworks, and teacher beliefs. Restrictive monolingual policies remain a critical barrier, constraining students' ability to utilize their full linguistic repertoires and thereby limiting their academic potential (Menken & Sánchez, 2019).

The urgency of rethinking language policies to embrace linguistic diversity cannot be overstated. Supportive environments, such as those documented in California and the Basque region, illustrate how policy shifts can legitimize translanguaging and lead to improved educational outcomes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Muñoz-Muñoz et al., 2022). Future directions for research should include longitudinal studies to assess the sustained academic and social impacts of translanguaging, as well as broader cross-cultural investigations to understand its adaptability across diverse contexts. Moreover, expanding teacher training programs to embed translanguaging pedagogy and investing in institutional support structures remain critical steps toward ensuring equity in education. In sum,

translanguaging is more than a pedagogical strategy; it is a framework for educational justice that recognizes and values the multilingual realities of contemporary societies.

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