Teachers of English Learners Respond to Covid-19 Realities

Translanguaging in Action: Pedagogy that Elevates

Efficacy of Mobile Apps in Teaching Foreign Languages

Teacher-Based Assessment Practices at a Japanese University

Professional Growth through Peer Observation & Idea Implementation

The Writer's Practice

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Feature Article

Teachers of English Learners Respond to COVID-19 Realities: Online Graduate Program Insight

Svetlana V. Nuss, PhD., Grand Canyon University School of Education and University of Alaska

Abstract

This article presents a descriptive analysis case study conducted in the stream of teacher action research. An instructor-generated questionnaire was administered to teacher education program participants (n=141) who are practicing U.S. teachers of English learners (ELs). All respondents were enrolled in an online graduate-level teacher education program with a concentration in bilingual education and TESOL certification. The results of the questionnaire indicate that, as teachers of ELs worked in a variety of pre-K–12 settings and modes of instruction during the pandemic, including school closures, 67.4% of teachers worked longer hours compared to their pre-pandemic workloads. Additional data analysis includes teacher-reported meaningful student engagement, instructional modeling in teacher education programs, and the use of technology in teacher education. As the educational profession evaluates the effects of the pandemic on the state of teaching and student achievement and sets post-COVID directions, this data may help inform decisions. The article highlights the value of modeling practices in tertiary instruction for educators and the use of educational technology in a teacher education program. It also advocates for increased teacher voice and agency in shaping professional development of in-service teachers. The article ends with a call to administrators, policy makers, teacher education programs, and publishers to acknowledge the unprecedented professional growth of school-based educators and seek teacher-generated reflections on the pandemic-induced changes in their pedagogy to help inform future professional development, educational policy, and teacher education program development.

Keywords: EL, ELL, teacher education, bilingual education, TESOL certification, pre-K–12, pandemic, school closure, COVID-19, online graduate program, instructional technology

Introduction

Summer of 2020 came and went, and the pandemic-ridden 2020-2021 school year is almost over. The air is filled with special excitement; as we make plans for another school year, the questions are still many, the answers are few, and the needs of the educators serving our English language
learners (ELLs) are diverse (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Having dominated the United States for some time, the pandemic conversation should be attended to in the graduate programs preparing teachers to work with English language learners and otherwise diverse student populations (Hamilton et al., 2020; Nuss, 2021b). As I watched the pandemic unfold, I invited my graduate students in the online Bilingual Education and TESOL Certification program to reflect on its effects in the pre-K–12 setting together from March 2020 through April 2021. Geographically, enrolled students represented most of the fifty U.S. states and territories. There were ten cohorts of students involved in the survey with a total number of 141 participants.

I turned to descriptive analysis to investigate the causal effects of the societally-induced change on the classroom practices of teachers and the learning behaviors of their students during the pandemic. Used to describe social phenomena, this kind of inquiry is instrumental in creating an accurate contextual representation of cause and effect in applied social sciences, such as education, where questions of how a certain phenomenon affects the lives of its various participants can be answered (Gopalan et al., 2020). As a formal process of scientific inquiry following a well-established design routine of observing phenomena, identifying research questions, generating and testing hypotheses, and then conducting new observations and producing new questions and hypotheses (Loeb et al., 2017), this qualitative investigation favors a descriptive approach with the purpose to capture the events in two educational settings: pre-K–12 and graduate-level teacher education programs. The events were unfolding over the course of a year, from March of 2020 through April of 2021, making this a longitudinal study. This sets it apart from the many pandemic-related surveys administered to the teaching profession, as many of them were one-time here and now solicitations. A fundamental component of scientific inquiry, descriptive analysis is uniquely positioned to organize its observation sequence. It highlights the perspectives on the world and phenomena, driving new research questions, which, in turn, enable a new wave of hypotheses on the issues being observed and described as they influence new inquiry and policy development (Loeb et al., 2017). This exploration is also an example of teacher action research (Manfra, 2019).

Scope and Methods

This longitudinal investigation took place over the course of a year in an online teacher education graduate program. Data analyzed in this article are part of a larger data set collected by administering to students a sequence of questionnaires. This study reports on the data collected via one questionnaire with multiple choice and open-ended questions administered to 10 cohorts of participants between March 2020 and April 2021. To analyze the data, I reviewed all participants’ responses and developed emerging themes. The qualitative and quantitative data was then used to capture and describe causal effects of the societally-induced change on the classroom practices of teachers and the learning behaviors of their students during the pandemic. This study also draws on my reflection on structural changes implemented in a tertiary teacher
education program in order to meet the changing needs of my students who, in turn, had to respond to the sudden shift in demands of their workplace.

Participants

There were a total of 141 participants in 10 cohorts of graduate students, all of whom were practicing teachers in a variety of pre-K–12 settings. All participants were enrolled in an online teacher education master’s program with a concentration in Bilingual Education and TESOL Certification. Most of the respondents, 85.7%, reported they had ELs in their inclusive mainstream classrooms and/or worked with ELs in a bilingual setting. Geographically, enrolled students represented most of the fifty U.S. states and territories. All responses were made anonymous.

Pandemic discussion in a teacher education program

The idea behind proposing the survey to my students, making its results available to them, and offering to students a communication space in the discussion forum of the courses I taught was inspired by my desire to provide these teachers with a support structure, to enact a meaningful solution amidst the pandemonium and confusion in educational circles during the pandemic. As I witnessed fundamental shifts of instructional modes the teaching profession was experiencing in my own workplace of a pre-K–12 urban school district and tertiary teacher education program (Nuss, 2021b), I noticed that many teachers turned to social media for professional support and encouragement, a rich but not often curated resource. I saw the need for a high-quality collaborative discussion for educators and created such a space within my courses by providing teachers with a venue for reflection and an opportunity to exchange ideas. Very soon it became apparent that many of my students faced common challenges of having to

(a) organize instruction in various modes in response to limited or ceased face-to-face instruction;
(b) streamline the communication with families and collaboration with colleagues; and
(c) make sense and use of the new technology in order to facilitate students’ learning, among other priorities (not to mention the fact that many of these professionals were also facing COVID-19–induced personal tragedies and health crises while having to meet educational needs of local communities).

Evident from the start of the discussion, the degree of professional support available to teachers became a prominent and important variable—the teachers had different support systems provided by their districts, states, and local communities, which made course interaction that much more meaningful, as it encouraged nation-wide comparisons which, in turn, revealed nation-wide patterns (Domina, 2021; Nuss, 2021b). Sharing common discussion space opened opportunities for meaningful peer support and collaboration. The teachers commented on the
challenges expressed by their colleagues, offered solutions and council, shared materials and technology tips, and provided each other with lasting support and encouragement. COVID-themed discussions can get very personal with emotions swinging high (Gross & Opalka, 2020), so participation in the survey was optional: I left it up to the students whether or not to join the conversation. A Google form questionnaire (see Appendix) was created to initiate the exchange. The questions of the survey were informed by student comments in the discussion forum of the course, as well as by my professional observations of and conversations with teachers of ELs in a pre-K–12 school district I was working with at the time. Even though participation in this questionnaire was not required, the vast majority of students – over 98% – opted to participate as an alternative way to earn course participation credit.

The conversations that developed within the course based on this questionnaire revolved around a few main themes:

(a) facilitation of student engagement in and outside of school buildings;
(b) the actions or lack thereof of school, district, and state administrations in response to the pandemic;
(c) serving all students equitably and providing quality education to all—including teachers’ own—children, as well as ways to continue making available for students access to educational materials, food, and safe learning spaces;
(d) re-evaluation of volume of instructional content: should or should not the content change in response to the new conditions, and if yes, what changes should be implemented;
(e) communication with families and what to do to engage families in more meaningful ways;
(f) tips on running various learning management systems and applications, as well as using technology responsibly and equitably;
(g) ways to differentiate instruction to better address the needs of linguistically, socially, and otherwise diverse students; and
(h) physical safety and emotional state of educators and interactions with local communities.

The forum validated teachers’ feelings and provided actionable solutions to challenges.

**Walking the talk: The value of modeling in teacher education**

As the responses to the questionnaire were rolling in, I read and re-read them in search of common threads of high priority needs that could be addressed within the space of my courses. I was determined to be a part of the solution and actively sought out ways to be helpful: The very fact of initiating and sustaining this discussion and adjusting the course design to meet the
demands of current realities of teachers’ workplace was a meaningful event in itself; however, I wanted to extend my impact as an instructor.

A persisting theme of insecurity in the use of technology emerged within the very first group of responses. Being a recent technology convert and coming from an all-paper background myself, I had first-hand knowledge of just how obstructive inadequate capacity in this area could be and was compelled to do something about it. I turned to Hattie’s (2008) ranking of influencers of student achievement based on meta-analyses of 800 studies (number of studies at the time of its first publication in 2008. The number of studies increases and effect sizes get adjusted as the research continues; see Hattie & Hamilton, 2020). According to this line of research, interactional videos deliver the highest effect size among various digital technologies with an effect size of .54. Considering the average effect size of .40 in Hattie’s interpretation of surveyed studies, anything above .40 could be viewed as a desirable influence on student achievement. Based on this information, I modified the course instruction to include simple yet impactful interactional video technology in the very matrix of the course and made students’ subsequent learning experiences more interactive. For example, instead of another discussion post, the students were now invited to work within the space of an interactive video in EdPuzzle. As a result, course participants were working with technology, not writing about working with technology in their discussion posts. They had a chance to experience technology in action and feel its impact on their own learning.

**Note on the technology used:** EdPuzzle activity, housed on an EdPuzzle website, allows the use of a video where a learner can interact with it. As someone is watching the video, it automatically pauses at predetermined times and the screen displays a question for the viewer to respond to. The questions can vary and depend on the instructional goals of the person creating it; they can be answered with a multiple-choice (automatically graded by the program) or a free write response option (instructor grades by hand). The program has a low learning curve for both the creator of EdPuzzle activity and the learner, and it has a free membership option. For an example of an EdPuzzle video activity, see this link: https://edpuzzle.com/assignments/5f1e288a6fa2813f25650a82/watch.

This seemingly small change in the instruction delivery made a big difference for students: when asked to reflect on their learning experience by responding to the question, “Was EdPuzzle an enjoyable form of reflection for you, or would you prefer to watch a video and write an essay?” almost all participants chose “Yes, it was enjoyable and I felt productive,” with two responding, “No, I didn't enjoy learning with EdPuzzle and would prefer to just watch a video and write an essay.”

The participants appreciated the authenticity of their learning experience and noted in their course reflections that it was “refreshing” to get to be “on the other side”—in the shoes of their
students. Some stated they had heard of EdPuzzle before but never took the time to look into it due to “technology overload” and the possible learning curve associated with acquiring new technology (Alqurashi, 2020). Having experienced it as a learner, the teachers now could see the application’s potential in facilitating student learning and felt they were “very likely” to take the time to transform some of their classroom instruction delivery to include this program into their classroom workflow:

I found the EdPuzzle interesting in lesson delivery and as a means to check comprehension. It allows for students to see the question's keywords and to re-watch to listen for those words in order to help them organize their thoughts. As we venture into another 9 weeks or more of online teaching and learning, this resource could prove very useful (respondent Y., January 2021).

Thank you for introducing us to EdPuzzle! I have never heard of it but I want to look into it further, especially being 100% remote learning for the first part of this school year, for my students! (respondent H., December 2020)

I will be trying EdPuzzle with distance learning. Thank you for the resource! (respondent L., August 2020)

This example illustrates how a teacher education program may respond to the changing needs of those it serves and use modeling to differentiate instruction delivery. In this episode, the program matrix is changed to support the teachers in their quest for navigating the surge of technology suggestions channeled at and directly marketed to them during the pandemic as the result of decreased face-to-face instructional opportunities. A simple technology solution with a low learning curve is identified, and teachers are afforded the opportunity to experience its impact on their own learning, thus gaining command of this new technology.

**How much do mainstream teachers of ELs work during school closure?**

Going over student responses to the questionnaire was a sobering experience. One of the questions in the questionnaire stands out in its ability to reveal the pandemic’s impact on the amount of time teachers in pre-K–12 settings spend preparing for, delivering, and differentiating their instruction for ELs and other learners. When asked to reflect on how much time the teachers worked during the pandemic as compared to pre-pandemic, 67.4% stated they worked more than usual, 17% reported working less than usual, and 15.6% stated they worked about the same amount of time as during normal pre-pandemic school days. Below is the chart with the data from the questionnaire:
During school closure, do you find yourself working
141 responses

- More than usual: 67.4%
- Less than usual: 15.6%
- About the same as during normal school days: 17%

Figure 1. Respondents’ answers to the question of whether or not their work hours changed with onset of the pandemic.

Continuous selfless giving

Once the results of the questionnaire were anonymously shared with the students, many responded with comments. Here are some of the teacher participants’ reflections on the chart above:

I think one of the reasons many of us are working more than usual is because everything is so new. I feel similarly to how I felt in my first year of teaching as I'm trying to keep my head above water and reach my students day by day (respondent A., May 2020).

Many of us are trying to develop a new structure for an online class, spending a large amount of time communicating with our students and their families (which can be extra difficult when students' families are unfamiliar with technology and there is a language barrier), and we are having to find and create new materials in order to deliver content to students (respondent D., June 2020).

The fact that over 67% of teachers reported working more than usual and another 15.6% reported working the same amount of time when the school closures have overwhelmed the nation, as the COVID-19 wave engulfed one state after another, illustrates quite decisively that most pre-K–12 educators have held their ground: teachers worked even harder from home, responding to the diverse needs, linguistic and otherwise, of their EL and other student populations. No amount of micromanaging by the district or school administration could have achieved this kind of continuous selfless giving.
Facilitating meaningful student engagement during distance learning

Another conversation this questionnaire stirred up was meaningful student engagement when face-to-face educational setting was abruptly forced to shift to a distance learning environment. The topic of student engagement resurfaces in many teaching publications today and continues to dominate educational social media (Malkus et al., 2020). As this survey showed, there is a good reason why.

![Student engagement during school closure](image)

**Figure 2.** Student engagement during school closure, estimated by classroom teachers.

Many teacher participants reflected on how challenging it was for them to facilitate EL student participation and meaningful engagement when, suddenly, they no longer shared a common physical space with their students:

> My school... has chosen to use Google Classroom and Zoom as their two main platforms. While many students are attending the Zoom calls (about 50%), not very many are viewing and completing the materials and assignments on Google classroom (only about 10%) (respondent M., April 2020).

The perception of the reality where only about 50% of students were actively learning (green and purple in Figure 2) certainly reflected on the educators’ attitudes: “It has been hard to stay motivated in putting the time and effort to create assignments and tutorials when it doesn't seem to be reaching students. However, I do not want to give up in looking for creative solutions” (respondent K., June 2020).

This data raises questions of the online graduate teacher education programs’ purpose and effectiveness, as the data fosters and contextualizes the discussion about the support teacher education programs provide for the in-service teachers who enroll in them. These programs in
their current frame mostly manage students, ushering them through a sequence of courses, leaving little room for the faculty to be responsive in connecting to the immediate needs the teachers face in their workplace.

This data also lends evidence to the discussions of the quality of learning that took place during the pandemic (Blagg et al., 2020; Domina et al., 2021; Hamilton et al., 2020; Malkus et al., 2020) and possible achievement gap educators and families may be mitigating in the coming school year (Domina et al., 2021). How much learning takes place when a student is engaged vs. not engaged in learning? Moreover, how accurate teacher’s estimate of student engagement really is? Acknowledging the deeply nuanced nature of the notion of engagement (Lester, 2013), I use the term engagement with the understanding of its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interconnected components in their meaningfully impactful nature (Fredericks et al., 2004). It is easy to predict that the questions of meaningful student engagement during the 2020-2021 school year will remain on the educators’ and researchers’ radars.

Conclusion

(I) Reliability, Limitations, Generalizability
This research presents preliminary results as it reports on the COVID-19 discussion that took place in an online Bilingual Education and TESOL Certification graduate program of a School of Education in a southern university in the U.S. The discussion took place from March 2020 – April 2021. The descriptive analysis investigates first-hand accounts of the realities and effects of the pandemic and school closures expressed by ten cohorts of pre-K–12 teachers, all enrolled in a graduate-level tertiary teacher education program with concentrations in bilingual education and TESOL certification. It is also a reflection of a graduate teacher education course instructor who allowed the pandemic to inform some of the instructional content by opening up the space of the courses to students sharing their perceptions of the realities they were facing at schools, the questions these new realities posed for them, the ways teachers responded to the pandemic-related challenges, particularly those stemming from having to respond to and work through the new student behaviors and societal inequities. This effort stemmed from a deep concern for the condition of educators in the field during COVID-19 and the daily realities that the pre-K–12 teachers faced. The study uses quantitative and qualitative data provided by teachers participating in the pandemic-based questionnaire and the discussions that ensued on the pages of the shared online courses space implemented as a change to regular course workflow to describe and analyze the pandemic-induced educational realities.

The reliability of teacher action research and quasi-experimental descriptive research results, claims, and estimates are known to vary across the designs (Golapan et al., 2020; Manfra, 2019; Nuss, 2021a), and this study is subject to such. First, the participants were not randomly identified: they were self-selected among their peers as teachers who committed to enhancing
their professional development by enrolling in a graduate-level university course. Further, my students were enrolled in the program where the demand for equity and student advocacy is inherently high, as these students were acquiring certification to work with ELs, an area of education traditionally related to the advocacy efforts that reach beyond those in regular education (Calderon et al., 2019; Nuss, 2020; Zacarian et al., 2021). Despite the noted limitations of the study, its narrative and results may help inform the decisions many state-, school- and district-level administrators are facing today (Hamilton et al., 2020), as the schools moved into planning for the 2021-2022 school year.

(II) New reality by design
Mirroring nationwide conversation rates (Blagg et al., 2020), graduate student participation in the discussion forum space devoted to the pandemic was exceptionally high, with the number of student posts reaching far beyond the general course requirements. It did not seem to matter anymore to these teachers whether or not they had already met their course participation goals: Without exception, the educators were not just reflecting on the current realities, but actively searching for meaning within. Deep individual reflection and collective teacher inquiry (Manfra, 2019) moved into the construction of a new reality as the educators reflected on each other’s unique experiences and engaged in shaping new instructional practices and perceptions. The results of this study may inform future policy decisions in organizing instructional delivery frameworks, advancing teacher action research (Manfra, 2019; Nuss, 2021a), and teacher education program design (Nuss, 2021b). It also serves as a model of differentiating instruction for adult learners in teacher preparation programs.

While it would be difficult to generalize the results of this investigation to all teachers, the data can be representative of the teachers who work or prepare to work with ELs. At the very minimum, it may help to alleviate any doubts about the quality of effort teachers put into their work with the linguistically and otherwise diverse student population as they respond to the pandemic demands while working from home and through other modes of instructional delivery.

This report presents a preliminary, not exhaustive descriptive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the longitudinal investigation that took place from March 2020 through April 2021. Representing the teacher action stream of research, the study shares common traits of such explorations identified and described in Manfra, 2019 and Nuss, 2021a, particularly, limited institutional support in study design and data analysis, lack of access to text analysis software, as well as the time constraints. Nevertheless, the study sheds light on the effects of COVID-19 in two educational settings, pre-K–12 and tertiary teacher education, and adds to the understanding of how teachers learn and work to overcome adversity.
This qualitative and quantitative data captures and describes causal effects of the societally-induced change on the classroom practices of teachers and the learning behaviors of their students during the pandemic. It suggests that

(a) during school closures caused by the pandemic, 83% of teachers worked longer (67.4%) or the same hours (15.6%) as pre-pandemic;
(b) teachers benefited from the immediate professional development they could turn to without detriment to their professional reputation;
(c) online teacher education program is perceived by its students, who are practicing pre-K–12 teachers, as more efficient and beneficial to them when such program embeds differentiated instruction in the very matrix of its courses, modeling instructional strategies for the program’s students;
(d) teachers may willingly uptake an instructional strategy for use in their own practice once they experience the strategy as a learner;
(e) when working through the pandemic-induced challenges in delivering equitable education to all learners, teachers experienced unprecedented professional growth, which was achieved by working longer hours to research, prepare, deliver, self-evaluate, and improve instruction and to connect with families and students;
(f) teachers and other school-based educators must engage in rigorous formal reflection writing practices to detail first responder accounts of their changed pedagogy as these accounts should largely shape future professional development discourse;
(g) as first responders, school-based educators are well positioned to impact the educational profession by sharing their newly acquired pedagogical practices and must have voice in shaping of their professional development, rather than being simply managed by the districts’ administration, professional development providers, and tertiary educational programs.

The data gleaned from the survey, however rich, is not the most valuable contribution of this study. This work’s main value is in validating teachers' voice and elevating teacher agency. The pandemic created conditions where the lasting experience of working through constant change made a strong impact on each individual teacher for whom responding to the change caused professional growth of an unprecedented scale. District and state administrations and tertiary educational systems must acknowledge it and account for it moving into the post-pandemic reality. How to do it is another good question. Given my extensive experience with instructional coaching, I suggest partnership (Knight, 2019) and subject-specific instructional coaching, such as EL instructional coaching (Nuss, 2020), as possible vehicles of developing such differentiated professional development. This study helps charting a way into a new reality where teachers are viewed as capable professionals who thrive when they collaborate, not being talked at or micromanaged.
I, therefore, end with the following calls to action:

- A call to administrators and policy makers involved in educational decision-making, as well as tertiary teacher education programs, to acknowledge the vast change in the educational workforce taken place over the course of the pandemic of 2020-2021, give school-based faculty a greater role in making professional development decisions, and facilitate further strengthening of teacher voice and agency in the profession.
- I appeal to teachers and other school-based educators to recognize the exceptional value of their newly gained expertise and consider embarking on the rewarding journey of rigorous formal professional reflection practices, such as teacher action research and case studies, and making the resulting texts available to a variety of high quality peer-review publishing outlets.
- I call to educational publishing venues to recognize the shift toward increased teacher agency in the post-COVID education and to provide publishing opportunities past those traditionally available to school-based educators, taking teacher-generated discourse beyond ‘practice corners.’

References


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Dr. Svetlana Nuss helps school districts establish and develop their EL Instructional Coaching programs. As a linguist, language teacher, and teacher educator at the University of Alaska and Grand Canyon University, she develops teaching approaches for morphologically rich languages like Russian and teaches in an online Bilingual Literacy and TESOL Certification graduate program. She believes in supporting the profession and serves as a board member for two professional organizations of educators. Svetlana is a co-founder of the EL Coaching Alliance, a professional organization for coaches of teachers who work with diverse English learners.

Her degrees are M.Ed. and PhD.

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Appendix

Questions used in the Google form survey

1 During school closure, do you find yourself working: more than usual, less than usual, about the same as during normal school days?
2 In your estimate, what part of your students is engaged and participating during school closure? About 10%, 10-25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, 75-100%
3 What kind of technology do you find yourself using the most during school closure? Please list three of your top go-to's
4 Do you feel like you raise a storm of activity with your students? If not, what obstacles do you have? What would help you?
5 What do you wish you had done in February of 2020 that would help you and your students now?
6 Do you feel you have adequate instructional and otherwise support at your workplace right now (technology, SEL, and more)? Yes/No
7 We hear today that life will not be the same after the pandemic. What do you think life after the pandemic will be like for teachers?
8 What is your number one fear and concern for what life after the pandemic will be like (in general, not school-specific)?
9 How would you describe your typical workday during school closure?
10 What activities do you do or see other teachers do that harness the most student engagement?
11 Do you have additional comments? Please share your thoughts!
Feature Article

Translanguaging in Action: Pedagogy that Elevates

Jessica Dougherty, Ed.D, Western Oregon University

Abstract

Developing the skill set of ESOL and bilingual educators is a critical task considering ESOL/bilingual education is a continually expanding field. Culturally and linguistically responsive teachers benefit from acquiring knowledge and expertise in a variety of ESOL and bilingual approaches in order to meet student needs in PK-20 educational systems. The use of translanguaging in ESOL and bilingual classrooms is investigated in this small-scale, qualitative research project. This article explores teacher candidates’ experiences implementing the translanguaging approach during their clinical experience. The research investigates the benefits of creating a space for multilingualism in educational settings, employing effective translanguaging strategies, and discusses the results of these actions. A suggested instructional plan is outlined for applying translanguaging in the classroom. Recommendations are made for including the translanguaging approach in professional learning, pedagogical practices, and practitioner reflection.

Keywords: Translanguaging, translanguaging space, translanguaging pedagogy, ESOL/bilingual education, emergent bilingual, teacher candidate

Introduction

I have been in the profession of bilingual and ESOL education for 24 years. My journey led me from serving as a bilingual classroom teacher to becoming an instructor in an ESOL/bilingual program in higher education. My grandparents passed on their legacy for being passionate about quality ESOL/bilingual education for emergent bilinguals, as they learned English as an additional language themselves, and were also bilingual educators. This is one of the reasons I pursue this work. It directly affected people I adore and admire, and I saw firsthand the influence it had on their lives. This led my efforts in this research and also inspires me in my everyday work as an instructor and supervisor of teacher candidates in this vocation. Quality ESOL/bilingual education is not only an act of effective practice, but is also an act of social justice since it promotes an additive philosophy surrounding emergent bilinguals and provides equal access to curriculum through instructional strategies that promote comprehension (García, 2009). I am deeply committed to preparing teacher candidates, and informing all educators,
about practices that can make an impact on emergent bilinguals academically, cognitively, socially and emotionally.

As the field of ESOL and bilingual education continues to grow, newer educational approaches that have been practiced in other countries have surfaced in the U.S. in order to better meet the needs of emergent bilinguals at all levels of education. Considering that emergent bilinguals make up nearly 5 million of the student population in K-12 schools in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2018), it is imperative that educational practices evolve and expand so students at all educational levels comprehend subject area and course material while developing languages within their linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging is one such approach, as it utilizes all the languages spoken by educators and students to purposefully and simultaneously deliver instruction and teach language through the employment of specific strategies. In order to fully implement this approach, educators are responsible for opening a “translanguaging space”, which is the creation of “a space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience” (Wei, 2011, p. 1223). In an educational setting, this act invites emergent bilinguals to engage in social, academic, and cognitive tasks in languages of their choice. Therefore, the translanguaging space places value and purpose on all languages, which facilitates a balance in power of languages used by participants and contributes to increased participation, academic success, and positive identity development. Additionally, it can be integrated into any ESOL or bilingual program model in order to elevate students, teachers, instruction, learning, and language development in PK-20 classrooms.

**Defining Translanguaging**

Translanguaging is defined as “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential (García, 2009, p. 140). A critical aspect of translanguaging is that it is an integrated approach to teaching language and is not the teaching of two separate languages (Cummins, 2005). It is an opportunity for emergent bilinguals and teachers to go beyond translation and to engage in the process of delivering comprehensible input (Krashen, 1987) and producing comprehensible output (Swain, 1985) using the proffered language/s of the emergent bilingual. Furthermore, by opening a translanguaging space and creating a multilingual setting, bilingual students are given the opportunity to access the delivered instruction and demonstrate knowledge without the barriers that exist with single-language use. Concurrently, the utilized linguistic features of each language employed during instruction can be analyzed to encourage language acquisition.
It is important to note that translanguaging is different from code switching. Velasco and García (2014) describe code-switching as the alternation between languages during a conversation to replace or translate a word, whereas, translanguaging is a flow (or “corriente”) of comprehending input, applying knowledge, and synthesizing a conversation, a task, or a lesson while employing the features of all the languages utilized in the class, along with the cultural nuances and identity associations of the language (García et al., 2017).

In summary, in an educational setting, translanguaging is the act of utilizing the full linguistic repertoire of all students and teachers in order to interact socially, academically, and cognitively, which can lead to identity exploration and formation. Translanguaging is acknowledged as a philosophy of educating ESOL and bilingual students (García, 2009), an instructional approach for teaching emergent bilinguals (Williams, 1996; Baker, 1996), and a method for developing bilingualism and biliteracy (Hornberger & Link, 2012). It is also recognized for promoting social justice (Flores, 2013), as it creates an environment that attempts to equitably distribute social and academic resources by engaging in multilingualism.

**Translanguaging Benefits**

Multiple benefits have been associated with the translanguaging approach. These advantages are displayed in the academic, cognitive, and social realms of the emergent bilingual. Research has indicated that translanguaging has been directly connected to positive identity formation, lesson completion, increased participation, expanded vocabulary, and learning gains in math and reading (Breton-Guillen, 2020; Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Makalela, 2015; Musanti & Rodriguez, 2017). Ultimately, translanguaging not only contributes to increased academic success, but to the social-emotional wellbeing of the emergent bilingual as they journey through their scholastic careers. Consequently, the use of this approach provides rich opportunities for PK-20 students to display their understanding and expertise of academic content areas completely, instead of being restricted to simply translating their thoughts, responses, and knowledge.

**Translanguaging Strategies**

Transferring the philosophical aspects of translanguaging to pedagogical implications is essential in order to reap the full benefits of this approach. These strategies can be implemented in any classroom—mainstream, ESOL, and bilingual. Celic and Seltzer (2011) have developed a very useful translanguaging guide that offers specific suggestions for integrating translanguaging strategies effectively, such as multilingual cooperative grouping and research, use of multilingual texts and resources, preview-view-review, vocabulary inquiry, sentence building, syntax transfer, or the use of cognates. These strategies have been successfully implemented in classrooms across the globe, from Wales to Africa to the U.S. (Baker, 1996; Canagarajah, 2011; Creese &
Translanguaging strategies unfold in educational settings both spontaneously and purposefully. When a teacher has a foundational understanding of translanguaging practices and has opened a “translanguaging space” in their classroom, Moment Analysis, or “spur-of-the-moment actions,” take place to meet the academic and social needs of the lesson or interaction that is occurring. In addition to Moment Analysis (Wei, 2011), purposeful planning of translanguaging allows an educator to create a comprehensible subject area lesson, while also factoring in anticipated language demands prior to the instruction in order to foster language development alongside content area teaching. In this case, an educator can integrate the use of specific translanguaging strategies, such as cognates, vocabulary inquiry, sentence building etc. to promote content learning, cross-linguistic connections, and language development. Below is an example of how this could potentially be carried out in any PK-20 classroom based on my research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Content Lesson</th>
<th>General Content Lesson with Translanguaging</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary introduction</td>
<td>Vocabulary introduction with multilingual labels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary introduction with cognates</td>
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<td>Vocabulary inquiry</td>
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<td>Teach content</td>
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<td>Teach content using multilingual texts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teach content with multilingual dictionary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Practice sentence building with content</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vocabulary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use syntax transfer when necessary</td>
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<td>Group practice of content taught</td>
<td>Multilingual groups for discussion</td>
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<td>Multilingual groups for projects</td>
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<td>Use of multilingual texts and resources</td>
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<td>Sentence building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syntax transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent practice of content</td>
<td>Multilingual reading and writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syntax transfer: individual conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Plan for Infusing Translanguaging Strategies in Lessons.

In conclusion, the translanguaging approach offers a foundational philosophy of embracing and utilizing the full linguistic capabilities of educators and students in order to purposefully and spontaneously use specific strategies that promote academic support and language development while contributing to identity formation and providing an equitable learning environment for emergent bilinguals. In order to understand this approach further and investigate how and why
educators appropriate translanguaging, this study explored the use, appropriation, and impact of translanguaging by elementary teacher candidates. This study followed teacher candidates in particular because there is a gap in the literature regarding teacher candidates’ use of translanguaging in their teaching. The following were the research questions explored:

**Research Question #1**
How are the participants appropriating the translanguaging approach?

**Research Question #2**
What factors contributed to the participants’ use of translanguaging?

**Research Question #3**
What are the participants’ perceptions of the significance of implementing the translanguaging approach?

**Methods**

**Participants**
Three teacher candidates, who were selected through purposive sampling, voluntarily engaged in this study. They were enrolled in a teacher education program at a local university. The participants were undergraduate students pursuing initial teacher licensure, the ESOL endorsement, and the bilingual specialization. The university and school district involved in this research collaborate to prepare ESOL and bilingual teacher candidates. Each participant was placed with an ESOL/bilingual clinical teacher (mentor). All participants had taken ESOL/bilingual methods courses at the university prior to the study, which included the topic of translanguaging.

**Data Collection**
Three processes were used to collect data to answer the research questions. One tool included face-to-face interviews which were conducted individually throughout the research project using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). The interviews occurred near the beginning, middle, and end of the study. They were a reflection of all experiences related to the use of translanguaging during the course of the investigation, not just a reflection of observed lessons. These interviews were held at the elementary school where the research took place in a private conference room of the participant’s choice. I completed transcription and a three-step coding process, which included initial, focused, and thematic coding following each interview (Grbich, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). A member check was conducted with each participant to ensure accuracy of the transcription before the coding process and provide validity to the data (Kornbluh, 2015).
Observations were another tool used since they provide direct, firsthand information pertaining to the topics under investigation. A minimum of two direct observations were completed for each participant. These observations focused on the pedagogical implementation of translanguaging and the corresponding impact on teaching and learning. An observation form (Appendix B) was utilized to record translanguaging pedagogical practices as defined by Celic and Seltzer (2011) as well as Gort and Sembiante (2015).

Lastly, fieldnotes were compiled during each of the observations (Emerson et al., 2011). These notes elaborated on the translanguaging practices that were observed and documented details about the impact the practices had on the participants’ teaching and their interactions with their students and mentors during the observation.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data revealed several themes that support the notion that translanguaging is beneficial, which promotes the continued and expanded use of translanguaging in educational settings. The research analysis noted that translanguaging can be used successfully both in an impromptu fashion and a purposefully planned manner, translanguaging strategies can create an impact on students’ comprehension of directions and subject area content, and that the translanguaging space fosters identity formation and increased participation. The participants’ perceptions of the positive impact of translanguaging, coupled with the support of mentors, directly influenced their appropriation of translanguaging.

It is important to mention that the data analysis process revealed that all three research questions should be answered in a unified manner rather than dissecting each separately. This resulted from the participants’ interview responses which stated that the research questions—how they appropriated translanguaging, what factors contributed to their use of translanguaging, and their perceptions of the approach—became an integrated cycle where each of the three questions impacted and intertwined with the others. Participants repeatedly noted that they acquired the translanguaging approach due to factors such as, mentor support, pre-planning, student responses, and their perceived benefits of translanguaging. When asked what contributed to the use of translanguaging in their teaching, Participant 1 noted that the mentors’ modeling of pre-planned translanguaging strategies facilitated their acquisition of the approach:

> Once you actually see them [translanguaging strategies] put into practice [by mentors], it’s interesting how the students respond to them. I think the strategies that were selected [by mentors] were so that we can see how they’re practiced. Normally, I don’t think of the end result, I think of the process. When it’s [translanguaging] planned out, we saw the fruits of how it’s happening and where it is happening.
Similarly, Participant 2 also credited their translanguaging appropriation to obtaining knowledge of translanguaging strategies and how to use them spontaneously after opening a “translanguaging space,” when they commented:

…just using it [translanguaging] and just having it in the back of my mind. I’m aware that this it’s translanguaging and, sometimes, if we’re working on vocabulary, this just happened in a small reading group yesterday, some of the vocabulary words resemble English words and so I said, “What is a word that is similar to this in English?” The student said the word and then said, “I know it in English and I see it in Spanish, now I know what it is.”

This is one example of how Moment Analysis and spontaneous use of translanguaging strategies, such as vocabulary study and cognates, can elevate a lesson by offering the educator tools for creating comprehensible input. Noticing this increase in comprehension and a possessing a stronger ability to create clarity within a lesson were definitely additional reasons for participants’ continued integration and appropriation of translanguaging. This is evident in the following comments by Participant 3:

I think just having the extra [translanguaging] strategies and just being mindful that having both languages helps [student] understanding. Just knowing which strategies I can use and how I can connect English to Spanish and not just using languages as a way of communication, but using them as a way to help [students] learn better. It can be used as a tool for giving instructions and helping the students understand the material better.

Participant 2 added, “I think it’s [translanguaging] just helped them understand more and make connections between both of the languages. It’s easier for them to have both languages because it helps them develop both.” This shows agreement with the notion that participants appropriated and used translanguaging when they perceived students were making gains in language development and content area comprehension.

Additionally, participants recognized a connection between the use of translanguaging and students’ social-emotional well-being in the following comments from Participant 1:

I tend to pay attention a lot to how they [students] are emotionally. I know if this was purely English, they would have a lot more difficulties understanding the learning or even making friends with others. So because everyone is equal with Spanish and English, it gives them [students] a boost of confidence and self-assurance because they can use both [languages]. I think it mostly helps them feel confident because they can use the other language and it’s a resource for them. For example, there are moments when a student sees they don’t know English, but they can go back to Spanish and that elevates them.
In concurrence, Participant 3 shares similar feelings in their statements below regarding how translanguaging affects their students, which ultimately reveals reasoning for how and why they are appropriating and using translanguaging:

I guess in instruction, it’s [translanguaging] helped me see that it’s one way I can make sure students feel they can say what they know. They know there’s not that pressure that they’re going to say something wrong because whatever language they say or explain things in helps them be sure or confident and not make them worry whether it’s [the language] right or wrong.

Observations and fieldnotes provided an effective opportunity to further explore participants’ appropriation of translanguaging. During the observations, I frequently noted scenarios where participation greatly increased due to the participants’ opening a “translanguaging space” (Wei, 2011) and their implementation of translanguaging strategies. One example of this is in a classroom where the lesson was being taught in English. The teacher posed a question in English and only one student hand was raised to offer a response. When called upon, the student delivered their answer in Spanish. Once the teacher praised the student for their response and reminded students that it was acceptable to answer in Spanish even though the lesson was in English, many students’ hands raised with eagerness to participate. This is a perfect example of how opening a “translanguaging space” allowed for the flow of both languages, as is described by “translanguaging corriente” (García et al., 2017). Following this discussion, the teacher candidate continued the lesson employing the use of translanguaging strategies, specifically vocabulary introduction with multilingual labels and cognates, multilingual reading and writing, and sentence building. This ultimately led to increased student participation and comprehension, along with development of the lesson content and language learning.

Fieldnotes also recorded an instance during an observation where one participant explicitly opened the “translanguaging space” at various times throughout the teaching segment. During one instance, they simply stated, “You can answer in English or Spanish.” That offer resulted in several new students contributing to the discussion instead of the same few who were participating previously. The participant ended up with so many students joining in that they were able to elevate everyone’s speaking and critical thinking opportunities by conducting a multilingual group discussion through partner sharing where they participated in vocabulary inquiry relating to the content area vocabulary. This same type of interaction occurred frequently during all the observations as soon as the participants realized the translanguaging approach was affording them the opportunity to engage all students by simply using all the students’ languages for directions, instruction, and collaborative grouping. These realizations occurred during instruction and post-teaching reflections, and ultimately contributed to the appropriation and increased use of the translanguaging approach throughout this study.
Participants also revealed that the use of translanguaging, and their positive perceptions of the approach, prompted them to connect back to their own prior schooling experiences and their bilingualism. This inevitably helped them shape their identity as an emergent bilingual and as an ESOL/bilingual educator. This connection produced a profound effect on the teacher candidates and greatly impacted their appropriation and use of translanguaging. Participant 2 commented, “I think it’s [translanguaging] just something I’ve done in school, especially in Spanish classes, and then in some of my [ESOL] classes.” Reflecting on their personal use of translanguaging helped them develop their identities as language teachers themselves and contributed to the appropriation and use of the approach.

Participant 1 noted similar emotions, which are detailed below:

I know that if I would have had been in this type of classroom growing up, it would have been amazing to have been able to use both languages and see that they both have their own time for when we’re using them for a purpose. It’s not like we speak in Spanish because it’s easier.

Participant 3 further explained that they saw how both languages were used in a meaningful way with translanguaging in their clinical experience, which confirmed their idea that it would have been a benefit for them in their past schooling experiences. These conversations during interviews elucidated the fact that as participants were using translanguaging, they were also developing their own identities as emergent bilinguals and as bilingual educators, which promoted further appropriation and use of translanguaging. This is evident in the following comment:

I think it’s [translanguaging] important because prior to all of this [participating in the study], I didn’t realize that I, myself, use translanguaging all the time. We use them [translanguaging strategies] all the time. We use them without even knowing, and so I see it [translanguaging] in a positive light because it’s something that as an ELL, I use, so I can transfer that to my students so they can use their assets.

This data analysis directly answers the research questions and exhibits that the translanguaging approach was used and appropriated by the participants due many factors and perceived benefits. Some of these factors and benefits are mentor modeling, strategy knowledge, the impact of preplanned and spontaneous strategy use on students’ academic progress and language development, effect on student participation and social-emotional well-being, and the connections made to their own identities as emergent bilinguals. Translanguaging was clearly appropriated for specific and meaningful reasons that led to the development and success of the teacher candidate and the students they serve.
Recommendations

This study supported prior research in the field regarding the benefits of translanguaging, but it also revealed concepts about how and why teacher candidates appropriate the translanguaging approach. The findings convey that the participants perceived multiple benefits for their students and for themselves due to the implementation of the translanguaging approach. Conclusively, this contributed to the permanent opening of a “translanguaging space” in their classrooms and continued implementation of translanguaging strategies in their daily practice. This data supports the following recommendations:

1. Translanguaging coursework and/or professional development: Educators should be exposed to coursework and/or professional development directly related to the translanguaging approach, which might include the study of the translanguaging guide developed by Celic and Seltzer (2011).

2. Planning and implementation: Purposeful planning of translanguaging strategies accompany every lesson (see Table 1), while leaving space for translanguaging strategies to be implemented spontaneously to meet the needs of a particular moment in a lesson.

3. Data collection: Educators collect observational and anecdotal data during the use of the translanguaging approach to determine the effectiveness of opening a “translanguaging space” and the use of particular translanguaging strategies.

4. Observations: Record teaching samples for self-observation and reflection on the use of the translanguaging approach in a teaching segment or invite a colleague/mentor to conduct an observation followed with a reflective professional discussion on the use of the translanguaging approach in the observed lesson.

These steps will facilitate the integration of translanguaging into classrooms at all levels in order to elevate educators’ practices. It is possible that implementing these recommendations will foster a deeper desire to appropriate the translanguaging approach because of the results they can produce, such as increased student comprehension, support in language development, and encouragement of social-emotion well-being for emergent bilingual students.

Concluding Thoughts on Elevating Pedagogical Practices with Translanguaging

Translanguaging is one approach that contributes to excellence in ESOL/bilingual education and has the potential to empower emergent bilingual students as well as the educators who employ the approach. Opening a “translanguaging space” sets the tone for respect and use of all languages represented in a classroom. This invitation fosters positive, productive engagement in academic and social interactions so that the translanguaging teachers and students are positioned to engage in equitable and productive teaching, learning, language development, social-emotional growth, and identity formation. With this knowledge, the obvious next step is action and advocacy. The evidence is clear, and now work needs to be done to support emergent
bilinguals. It is my hope that educators will employ the strategies and suggestions offered in this article and also promote the use of the translanguging approach in their educational system in order to fortify teaching and learning in ESOL and bilingual educational spaces.

References


**Author**

**Dr. Jessica Dougherty** is a visiting assistant professor in the ESOL/bilingual education program at Western Oregon University. She teaches courses within this program and supervises teacher candidates in their clinical experience. Additionally, she currently serves as the coordinator of the ESOL endorsement program. Her research focus is primarily regarding ESOL and bilingual educational practices, such as translanguaging, and programs that support ESOL and bilingual teacher candidates, including the Bilingual Teacher Scholars program and the Salem-Keizer Collaborative.

This article is dedicated to the author's grandparents, Emma and Candelario Campos, who were bilingual educators and activists in Oregon and Texas, and who were the author’s inspiration for pursuing a career in the field of bilingual and ESOL education.
Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions
The definition of translanguaging, along with a list of strategies can be found here (https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Translanguaging-Guide-March-2013.pdf) and will be available to teacher candidates before and during the interview.

RQ1: How are bilingual teacher candidates appropriating the translanguaging approach?
• What is the purpose of translanguaging in your classroom?
• How do you regard the translanguaging approach?
• Which translanguaging strategies have you used in recent lessons?
• Why did you select those strategies?
• How is translanguaging carried out in your classroom?

RQ2: What facilitated the bilingual teacher candidates use of translanguaging?
• What contributed to your knowledge and use of translanguaging?

RQ3: What are the bilingual teacher candidates’ perceptions of the use of the translanguaging approach?
• Has the use of translanguaging affected your teaching? How?
• Has the use of translanguaging affected your students? How?
• Will translanguaging affect your future teaching? How?
## Appendix B

**Observation and Fieldnotes Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translanguaging Strategy</th>
<th>Teacher Candidate Actions</th>
<th>Student Actions</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
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Research Note
Efficacy of Mobile Apps in Teaching Foreign Languages: A Systematic Review

Chrystal Sapphire Dragonflame, Amanda A. Olsen and Jodi M. Tommerdahl, University of Texas at Arlington

With over 91% of Americans now owning cellular devices (PEW Research Center, 2019), mobile applications (apps), like those used for foreign language learning (FLL), are becoming increasingly popular (Yu, 2019). However, it is unclear what research has been conducted to determine how effective mobile apps are at teaching foreign languages. To address this gap in the literature, we conducted a systematic review on existing FLL app research to determine trends in the literature and identify studies with quantifiable efficacy measures (Olsen et al., 2021).

Although no current literature review to our knowledge has focused solely on FLL apps, Burston (2015) completed similar work by investigating literature on mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). In Burston’s study, 291 papers on MALL were reviewed to determine whether the research design and methods were scientifically sound. Studies with uncontrolled variables, fewer than 10 participants, research design shortcomings (i.e., lack of a control group), or inadequate statistical analyses were excluded. Only 19 studies met the criteria, demonstrating the dearth of research investigating the efficacy of FLL apps.

Building on Burston’s (2015) research, we conducted a systematic review using the same criteria to identify studies with quantifiable efficacy measures. Our review differed by including only research on mobile apps that focused specifically on FLL. An extensive search of databases beginning in 2008, which marked the beginning of mobile apps, to March 2020 resulted in 1786 studies being located. A total of 26 studies met the criteria, including having a quantifiable efficacy measure of any identified language area(s) such as vocabulary, pronunciation, or more general measures of language skills such as overall production or comprehension scores. This number was alarmingly low considering the popularity of FLL mobile apps, their claims to efficacy, and their sometimes-hefty cost to purchase.

The current review showed most of the FLL studies tested apps teaching English (N = 19, 73%), in classroom settings (N = 13, 50%), with college student participants (N = 12, 46%). In terms of efficacy, 21 (81%) articles reported the app intervention was effective in improving the targeted language area, with 5 (19%) studies reporting the app was partially or not effective. Another notable finding was that the most prevalent linguistic focus was vocabulary (N = 14, 54%). This aligned with research conducted by Heil et al. (2016), who after analyzing the 50 most popular
FLL apps found vocabulary to be the most commonly studied component of language learning, although it was often taught out of context and without corrective feedback. Considering that language also consists of areas such as grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics, Bolgün and McCaw (2019) argued that knowledge of a language out of context is unlikely to lead to mastery and conversational use. Research supports this theory, demonstrating that apps which teach grammar and vocabulary in context, rather than being presented in isolation, increased foreign language retention (Heil et al., 2016; Sung et al., 2015). It should be noted that although studies may have measured progress made in an isolated area of language such as vocabulary, that does not mean apps were limited to teaching that area or that they taught certain linguistic skills in silos. Apps teaching a combination of linguistic skills in an integrated manner may still be evaluated by a study in terms of the measurement of a single skill to determine efficacy.

The results from our systematic review have multiple implications. First, individuals of varying native languages were using a FLL app to learn English. This suggests that FLL apps should consider how an individual’s native language may inform how they learn a specific foreign language. Second, a majority of FLL apps have focused on teaching vocabulary knowledge which Bolgün and McCaw (2019) argued may not lead to language fluency. Third, although mobile apps may provide an accessible way to learn aspects of a foreign language, when choosing teaching materials and methods for FLL, educators should be mindful that few FLL apps have been rigorously studied for efficacy. Future research may help to identify apps with a sound evidence base that are worth investing time and resources in.

References
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Research Note

Washback and the Teacher-Based Assessment Practices of EFL Instructors at a Japanese University

Lee Hughes, Asia University

Background

The topic of washback itself and how it applies to oral assessment procedures/contexts is a relevant and important topic for the field of English language teaching, and there have been a number of studies into oral washback in evaluation of students (Khan et al., 2019). Washback effect refers to the impact of testing—whether positive or negative—on teaching practices, curriculum design, and learning behaviors. This has led to increased understanding of how to promote more positive kinds of washback. Washback can be positive when it provides students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Previous studies have investigated ESL/EFL instructors’ classroom assessment practices to find out their purposes and methods (Cheung et al., 2004). One of particular interest investigated the washback of an oral assessment system in an EFL classroom (Muñoz & Álvarez, 2010). In this article, the authors used a mixed methods approach and found that positive washback occurred in some areas, but that constant guidance and support is required to help teachers create positive washback in other areas.

Investigation

This study was done in order to understand more about why educators consider washback and how important it is in relation to assessment. I first explored how to conduct an effective qualitative and quantitative mixed method survey with regards to oral assessment washback. A quantitative survey (as used by Cheng et al., 2004) was given to five university English instructors at the beginning of the semester to find out more about the instructors and their beliefs regarding assessment. The first section consisted of their personal background, and the next section asked the instructors to rate their purposes and reasons for assessing their students. This included asking about their primary source for test items and assessment procedures, and how they provide feedback, if indeed they do so (see appendix for full questionnaire).

Discussion

While all of the instructors provided feedback to students after their assessments, there was not much feedback taking place during the assessment. This may have been done for several reasons including time restraints and not wanting to unfairly affect the outcome of an assessment, but this
is a chance wasted for positive washback as students who receive feedback immediately are more likely to remember it and use it to improve the remainder of their performance or on one that takes place in the future (McKinley & Thompson, 2018). In my experience, in particular, students are often interested in little more than their final score, and this was also mentioned by three out of the five instructors during the interviews conducted.

Instead of merely providing students with written feedback, it might be more useful if verbal feedback was provided either during or after the assessments depending on the kind of oral assessment being done. If the assessment is a presentation, for example, then feedback after, and not during, would be more appropriate to avoid the student being embarrassed during the class, and peer-assessment should be encouraged based on the literature review, which suggests it can be valuable and little bias occurs in most situations. Self-assessments may be useful as a way of seeing if a student understands how successful their performance was with regard to the assessment criteria, but it appears to be unhelpful when used as part of the actual assessment method based on my experience and the results of this study.

**Recommendation**

In this study, I found that while all of the instructors appeared to understand the importance of trying to promote positive washback, more needs to be done to ensure that every aspect is covered. Providing more feedback to students, and at relevant times depending on the kind of oral assessment being undertaken, must be carefully considered and appropriate for the context. Through more mixed method studies of this nature, we can continue to learn more about how to provide positive washback with oral assessments in particular settings within language schools or universities in various countries.

**References**


Author

Lee Hughes is a British national with a Masters degree who has been working as a visiting faculty member of Asia University in Tokyo, Japan for three years. Previously, he was a visiting professor at Keimyung University (four years, 2007-2011), and an assistant professor at Hongik University (two years, 2011-13) and Yongin University (two years, 2014-2016). He is an active member of the Global Issues in Language in Education (JALT SIC) and has published an article about Black Lives Matter and Racism in Japan (July, 2020).

Appendix

Quantitative survey to analyze the personal profile and assessment beliefs of instructors:

**Personal Profile and Assessment Beliefs**

**Personal Background**
1. Name ________________________
2. Age ________
   Gender _______ Female ________ Male
3. Academic/Teaching Qualifications
4. Teaching Experience (duration/kind of institutions/level of students)

**Your Purposes and Reasons for Assessing your Students**

1= Strongly agree       3= Somewhat agree       5= Disagree
2= Agree               4= Somewhat disagree    6= Strongly disagree

1. To group my students for instruction purposes in my class _____
2. To obtain information on my students’ progress _____
3. To plan my instruction _____
4. To diagnose strengths and weaknesses in my own teaching and instruction _____
5. To provide feedback to my students as they progress through the course _____
6. To motivate my students to learn _____
7. To make my students work harder _____
8. To prepare my students for standardized tests they will need to take in the future (e.g. the TOEFL) _____
9. To diagnose strengths and weaknesses in my students _____
10. To formally document growth in learning ______
11. To determine the final grades for my students ______

Methods for Assessing your Students’ Oral Skills
   • Check (X) the methods that you use

1. Oral reading=dictation ____
2. Oral interviews=dialogues ____
3. Oral discussion with each student ____
4. Oral presentations ____
5. Teacher made tests asking students to:
   a. give oral directions ____
   b. follow directions given orally ____
   c. provide an oral description of an event or object ____
   d. prepare summaries of what is heard ____
   e. answer multiple-choice test items following a listening passage ____
   f. take notes ____
   g. retell a story after listening to a passage ____
7. Peer assessment ____
8. Self assessment ____
9. Standardized speaking test ____
10. Standardized listening tests ____

Procedures of Assessment and Evaluation
1. Which of the following represents your primary source(s) for test items and other assessment procedures?
   Please check (X) all that apply.
   a. Items developed by myself ———
   b. Items prepared together with other teachers ———
   c. Items from published textbooks ———
   d. Items from mandated syllabuses=curricula ———
e. Items found on the Internet ———
f. Other published test items ———
g. Other (please specify):

2. When you give feedback to your students during the course, how do you provide that feedback? Please check (X) all that apply.

a. Verbal feedback ———
b. Checklist ———
c. Written comments ———
d. Teaching diary=log ———
e. Conference with student ———
f. Total test score ———
g. A letter grade ———
Teaching Note

Professional Growth Through Peer Observation and Idea Implementation

Patrick T. Randolph

Introduction

Class observations are extremely important for teachers’ professional growth and personal development. However, the mere idea of these observations is often met with unwanted stress and anxiety. This teaching note offers a new approach for undertaking and using peer observations for teachers in Intensive English Programs (IEPs). First, I briefly discuss the predominant class observation methods and their shortcomings. I then introduce a new method employed at Anglia Ruskin University in the United Kingdom (as cited in Cosh, 1998) and explain how I further enhanced that method through a process I developed, which can be used for peer observations, professional development, and annual teaching portfolios.

Three Standard Models of Class Observation and Their Pitfalls

In my 25 years of language teaching experience, I have seen different kinds of classroom observations for job assessment, which often weigh heavily for contract renewals. These observations, however, are not necessarily productive for professional growth, and they are often punitive in nature. There are three predominate models that are used in most IEPs. These include: (1) a director who observes and critiques a teacher; (2) a peer who observes and critiques a teacher; or (3) a director/assistant director and a peer who observe and critique a teacher. A major issue with these kinds of observations is that very few instructors actually incorporate the observer’s suggestions in their classes (Cosh, 1998; Randolph, 2018; Wajnryb, 1992). The instructors feel it best if the changes come from their own discoveries and growth as teachers. In addition, the comments often given by the class observer are not necessarily accurate because the observers are not always aware of particular dynamics in the class or what was previously taught and how the observed class ties in with the overall course content and flow (Cosh, 1998; Randolph, 2018). In short, these models are neither effective in terms of enhancing professional development nor in contributing to personal growth.

An Alternative: Peer Observation as Professional Development—A New Form of Collaborative Growth and Assessment

Class observations do not have to be stressful experiences; on the contrary, they can be productive and supportive ways to grow and gain pedagogical insights. One of the most effective types of class observations I have researched comes from Anglia Ruskin University in the United Kingdom (see Cosh, 1998). Instead of using the class observations for assessment, they use them
for professional development. According to Cosh (1998), “[w]e are observing in order to reflect upon our own teaching and for active self-development, rather than to make judgments upon others” (p.173).

In order to attain that goal, the faculty at Anglia Ruskin University set up the following system: First, teachers pair up and make two class observations each year. There is no set focus regarding what each will observe; they merely observe and record a point of interest that they learn while watching a colleague teach a class. The two colleagues later meet to discuss the insights and what they learned from each other. Then, they present their experiences at a department seminar or in discussion groups. The content of the observations and what was learned are also recorded and sent to the department chair for administrative purposes (Cosh, 1998).

**Peer Observation and Idea Implementation**

After researching this method, I created the following modified procedure. The version I developed goes slightly beyond the Anglia Ruskin University framework because the pedagogical points learned during the observations are later implemented in the observers’ classes and also recorded for their professional development portfolios (Randolph, 2017).

**The Process**

Two colleagues meet and agree to observe each other’s class early in the semester. Before their mutual observations, they meet to explain the content of the observed lesson. Next, they observe each other’s class and focus on one point of interest that they would like to implement in their own lessons (see the Appendix for an example of the peer observation form).

The teachers then meet after each observation, discuss the point of interest, and explore how they can implement what they learned from the observations. One month later, they meet to review how each has implemented the point of interest in their own classes. In this meeting, the teachers are able to see how peer observations can be an extremely positive and effective form of professional development as they nurture ownership of their methods and improve their craft. In addition, they are able to see their ideas being used in fruitful ways.

The peer observation project concludes by writing up a short report for the teacher’s annual review or for the teacher’s portfolio. The report’s content includes the following paragraphs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph one</th>
<th>Explains the observation method and introduces the two colleagues who observe each other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph two</td>
<td>Centers on the actual observation and the point of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph three</td>
<td>Discusses how the point of interest is implemented and examines the results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion Remarks

Class observations do not have to be stressful experiences. On the contrary, they should be productive and enriching opportunities for the primary purpose of honing one’s craft. The peer observation and implementation method offered here helps because it benefits both the teacher and his or her students by implementing new and effective teaching methods. In addition, it can be used as a professional development opportunity, and it can also be recorded for the teachers’ portfolios or annual reviews. I encourage English language learning departments and IEPs to use this on a semester basis as it requires only a few brief meetings and one observation. These peer observations are done to promote both enhanced teaching and learning as opposed to a mere department formality or administrative review with no pedagogical implications. And, most important, these observations help teachers see the value that they possess as integral members of the teaching community.

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Author

Patrick T. Randolph specializes in vocabulary acquisition, creative and academic writing, speech, and debate. Patrick has been awarded three “Best of TESOL Affiliates" (2015, 2018, and 2021). He has also received two “Best of CoTESOL Awards” for his 2017 and 2018 presentations on observation journals and creative writing. Recently, Patrick received the “Best Session Award” from MinneTESOL (2019-2021), and he has published New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing (2020). Patrick lives with his wife, Gamze; daughter, Aylene; cat, Gable; and puppy, Bubbles, in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.
Appendix

Peer Observation as Professional Growth & Learning
Randolph, 2021

Date:

Name of Observer:

Name of Observed Peer:

Class:

What is one aspect that you enjoyed most about the class?

What is one pedagogical aspect that you learned during the class?

What is one aspect that you would like to implement in your own class?

Briefly explain how you intend to do that.

What is(are) the benefit(s) you hope to gain from this new idea?
Book Review

The Writer’s Practice: Building Confidence in Your Nonfiction Writing

Reviewed by Jennifer Morris, ORTESOL Journal


The learning is in the doing. That is the simple premise of this engaging book by John Warner. We are all writers in life, and as teachers we are looking for ways to empower our students to develop their understanding of what it means to be a writer. For teachers of second language learners, of course we need them to understand language conventions, but as writers in the world, our students need to move beyond structured examples and explore what it means to write in the native speaking discourse community. Warner, an educator himself, wrote this book to help people approach writing as writers “trying to convey a specific message to a specific audience to fulfill a specific purpose” (p.6). This is not a textbook per se, but it provides wonderful insight into the practice of writing through what Warner calls “experiences,” which would be appropriate for students from around 5th grade all the way through adult education. Students need to understand the purposes of the various types of writing that they are asked to do for classes and beyond. This book can inspire educators to create writing activities that engage students in meta-cognitive processes about what it means to be a (good) writer in the real world.

The first part of the book, called “Getting Started,” is where Warner describes what he means by “experiences” and how they contribute to developing a practice as a writer. He believes that “everyone can learn to write, but to achieve this the writer must be in charge of their own learning” (p.9). The first writing experience for the reader is in “Getting Started,” and Warner asks us to explore who we are as writers — a useful exercise for educators and students alike.

The remainder of the book is divided into six sections, each focused on different types of writing. Warner introduces the writer’s practice itself in Section 1 with a focus on the attitudes, skills, habits of mind and knowledge that are necessary to do it well. He describes the writing process, the importance of purpose and audience in writing, and the necessary skill of reading like a writer. This reviewer has used excerpts from this section in an intermediate writing class at the university level in activities where students considered definitions of good writers and the writing process (in general and for them personally). Students can apply the habits of mind presented in this section when writing for various purposes in college always considering why they are writing and for whom.
The other sections of the book revolve around different types of writing from analytical to argument, each with several writing experiences to practice and explore these genres. Each section has a short introduction that would work well as a meta-cognitive reading task before exploring the writing for each genre. All of the experiences provide a context, audience and purpose for the writing as well as a reflection of the writing task. Some sections also include what Warner calls a “remix,” which is an opportunity to revise or reconsider the approach that one took to the writing experience. Throughout the book, there are authentic and interesting writing tasks to help us explore and hone our skills while gaining inspiration as teachers of writing. The experiences are adaptable to classrooms of different levels, though they may be most appropriate for intermediate and advanced level language learners. One task, which proved to be especially useful for this reviewer is titled “Why Should I Trust This? (Understanding Sources).” The purpose of this experience is to write a report to determine the accuracy and trustworthiness of an online article for someone who needs help with this skill. Through the experience, the writer must not only determine whether a source is credible, but also help the audience develop their own skills to engage with online content. As we work with emerging academic writers, understanding sources is a key component, and this experience helps them explore source validity and reliability.

Perhaps written for native English speakers but certainly applicable to how we teach second language writing, this book gets to the heart of what it means to be a writer and why we do this. It is invaluable for a practitioner who is devising classroom tasks for writing development in upper level English language classes. I read this book hoping to deepen my own understanding of writing as a practitioner but gained so much more. The Writer’s Practice provides practical approaches to moving a writing class beyond a standard 5-paragraph template and helps us understand how good writing adapts to the requirements of each situation.

**Author**

**Jennifer Morris** is an English language practitioner with 25 years of experience in the field of TESOL. She holds an MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL from the University of Leicester. She has worked in a variety of roles in higher education and curriculum development both abroad and in the U.S. She is the current editor of the ORTESOL Journal.
The ORTESOL Journal Editorial Policy and Submission Guidelines

*ORTESOL Journal*, a professional, refereed publication, encourages the submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language, especially in elementary and secondary education, and in higher education, adult education, and bilingual education. As a publication that represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the Journal invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics. The following areas are of special interest:

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*ORTESOL Journal* invites submissions in three categories: Full-length Feature Articles Manuscripts should be between 2,000 and 4,500 words. In addition, include a title of 12 words or less, an abstract of 140-160 words and a list of 4-9 key words.

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The Journal invites brief descriptions of successful teaching projects, practices, activities or techniques that may be adapted and applied by other teachers in a variety of classroom settings. Manuscripts should be no more than 750 words. Notes should specify guidelines that other professionals can follow and include objectives, class and preparation time, target audience level, implementation techniques and suggestions for alternatives.

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