

HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY広島大学

Reading Assignment for Class 7

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND COMMUNICATION II

外国語習得とコミュニケーション II

**Submission Information**

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1. Purposes

The paper (Muguruza et al., 2023) examines the use of translanguaging in an English Medium Instruction (EMI) course at a university in the Basque Country, Spain. The study revolves around Translanguaging, which involves the flexible use of multiple languages to improve learning outcomes. The research focuses on how English, Basque, and Spanish were used in the classroom to make lessons more accessible and reduce language barriers for students.

The goal of the study is to demonstrate how flexible language policies can address the challenges of strictly English-only instruction while still providing students with decent levels of exposure to English for academic purposes.

# Methods

The study focused on the course *Language Planning: Social and Educational Perspectives*, attended by 77 students, most of whom were bilingual in Basque and Spanish. The data were collected over two academic years through classroom observations, placement tests and group discussions.

Classroom observations, totaling 45 hours, provided insights into how the teacher and students utilized the three languages to support learning and participation. To measure changes in English proficiency, students took the Oxford Placement Test at the start and end of the course. Most students began at a B1 level (69.58%), and results showed a slight but significant improvement by the end of the course. The teacher primarily taught in English but encouraged students to respond in English, Basque, or Spanish.

# Findings

Since students were encouraged to use the language they were most comfortable with, this resulted in Spanish being used most often (45.5%), followed by Basque (35.1%), with English accounting for only 19.5% of classroom interactions.

Despite the low use of English for speaking and writing, the classroom functioned as a “translanguaging space,” where students could draw on all three languages to support their learning. This flexible approach allowed students to participate actively without being constrained by their English proficiency. In fact, students found the flexibility reassuring, especially for completing assignments or engaging in discussions. For instance, one student mentioned that knowing they could use Basque or Spanish gave them the confidence to enroll in the course.

However, while the policy helped improve students’ comprehension of English, their production of English remained limited, as usage of English was mostly constrained to short phrases like "yes" or "no."

# Implications

The study shows that translanguaging can act as an aiding tool for students struggling with English in EMI courses. Allowing students to use multiple languages improves comprehension and reduces stress, creating a more inclusive learning environment. For example, when a student had difficulty understanding a video in English, the teacher refused to translate the contents in the student’s L1 language, but instead summarized the content in simpler terms, showing how translanguaging supports understanding without sacrificing exposure to English.

This also suggests that education policies should move away from strict English-only approaches in EMI courses. A flexible policy that acknowledges the realities of multilingual classrooms not only supports language learning but also ensures equitable participation for all students. While translanguaging supports comprehension, it doesn’t necessarily promote English production. Future courses should aim to balance flexibility with activities that encourage more speaking and writing in English, such as group discussions or presentations.

# References

Muguruza, B., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2020). Implementing translanguaging pedagogies in an English medium instruction course, International Journal of Multilingualism, DOI:10.1080/14790718.2020.1822848