



Translanguaging and English Development in Saudi Arabian EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

The role of learners' first language (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has long been debated, particularly in contexts where English-only instructional policies dominate. Recent developments in translanguaging theory have challenged monolingual assumptions by conceptualising bilingual/multilingual learners as drawing on an integrated linguistic repertoire rather than separate language systems. This study investigates the effectiveness of translanguaging practices in Saudi Arabian EFL classrooms, focusing specifically on grammar and vocabulary development. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted, combining quasi-experimental data from preparatory year students with qualitative insights from questionnaires. Findings revealed no statistically significant differences between the instructional groups overall, although descriptive performance patterns slightly favoured the translanguaging-informed classroom, particularly in vocabulary-related tasks. Students also reported positive perceptions towards the use of Arabic in the classroom, highlighting increased comprehension, reduced anxiety, and greater engagement. Situating these findings within the educational reform agenda of Saudi Vision 2030, the study argues that strategic use of Arabic can function as a pedagogical resource rather than a barrier to English acquisition. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on bilingual pedagogy and language policy in multilingual educational contexts.

1. Introduction

The role of learners' first language (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has remained one of the most contested issues in language education. For decades, monolingual ideologies have shaped EFL pedagogy, positioning English-only instruction as the most effective approach to language acquisition. Such perspectives emerged from pedagogical traditions associated with the Direct Method and later communicative approaches, both of which emphasised maximum exposure to the target language. Within this framework, the use of the learners' L1 was frequently viewed as a hindrance that reduced opportunities for meaningful interaction in English and potentially fostered learner dependency.

However, recent developments in applied linguistics have increasingly challenged these assumptions. Research in bilingual education and multilingualism has demonstrated that learners naturally draw upon all available linguistic resources when constructing meaning. This shift has been particularly influenced by translanguaging theory, developed by scholars such as Ofelia García and Li Wei, who conceptualise bilingual communication as dynamic and

integrated rather than separated into distinct language systems. From this perspective, the strategic use of the L1 can support cognitive processing, scaffold understanding, and facilitate engagement with new linguistic content.

These debates are particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia, where English language education occupies a central position within national educational reform. Under Saudi Vision 2030, English proficiency has become increasingly associated with economic development, global competitiveness, and participation in international academic and professional environments. Universities and educational institutions are under pressure to improve English language outcomes, often resulting in strict English-only classroom policies. Nevertheless, classroom realities frequently diverge from official policy. Teachers and learners regularly draw upon Arabic to explain difficult concepts, clarify vocabulary, and manage interaction, particularly at lower proficiency levels.

Although translanguaging research within Gulf and Saudi contexts has increased in recent years, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing literature focuses on teacher perceptions, classroom discourse, or sociolinguistic identity rather than measurable language development outcomes. In particular, there remains limited quasi-experimental research examining whether translanguaging-informed pedagogy influences grammar and vocabulary acquisition within Saudi EFL classrooms. Furthermore, few studies combine quantitative performance data with learner perception data in order to examine both pedagogical effectiveness and learner experience simultaneously. The present study therefore addresses an important gap within emerging Gulf translanguaging scholarship by empirically examining the relationship between translanguaging practices and language learning outcomes in a Saudi university context.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are learners' perceptions towards the use of Arabic in Saudi EFL classrooms?
2. Does incorporating Arabic into EFL instruction significantly affect learner performance in grammar and vocabulary assessments?

This study contributes to ongoing discussions surrounding bilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, and language policy by providing empirical evidence from a Saudi Arabian context. It also aligns with broader educational reform initiatives under Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasise the importance of evidence-based educational practices capable of improving language learning outcomes while remaining responsive to local linguistic realities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Monolingual Ideologies in EFL Education

The dominance of English-only instruction within EFL classrooms has historically been rooted in monolingual ideologies that privilege exclusive target language exposure. Throughout much of the twentieth century, pedagogical approaches such as the Direct Method and Audiolingualism discouraged the use of learners' L1, arguing that immersion in the target language would maximise acquisition. These assumptions were reinforced by broader political and ideological discourses surrounding the global spread of English.

Robert Phillipson (1992) argued that English-only approaches were closely connected to forms of linguistic imperialism that positioned English as inherently superior to local languages. Within such perspectives, the use of learners' L1 was often framed not only as pedagogically ineffective, but also as an obstacle to authentic language learning. Similar assumptions became embedded within communicative language teaching, where fluency and target language interaction were prioritised above multilingual practices.

Nevertheless, despite the dominance of monolingual ideologies, classroom-based research has consistently demonstrated that both teachers and learners continue to rely on the L1 for a variety of pedagogical purposes. These include explaining grammar, introducing vocabulary, managing classroom behaviour, and reducing learner anxiety. Such findings suggest that strict English-only policies may fail to reflect the realities of multilingual classrooms.

2.2 L1 Use and Code-Switching Research

Earlier research examining the use of the L1 in language classrooms frequently focused on code-switching. Studies by Auerbach (1993), Anton and DiCamilla (1999), and Lin (2013) highlighted how teachers strategically used learners' L1 to facilitate comprehension and support interaction. Auerbach (1993), in particular, challenged assumptions surrounding English-only instruction, arguing that learners' L1 could serve as a valuable pedagogical resource rather than a source of interference.

Research conducted in EFL contexts further demonstrated that learners often preferred selective use of the L1 when dealing with complex grammatical explanations or unfamiliar vocabulary. For example, Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) reported that Iranian EFL teachers used learners' L1 systematically to support understanding and classroom management. Similarly, Bhooth et al. (2014) found that Arabic functioned as an important scaffolding tool within Yemeni EFL reading classrooms.

However, while code-switching research documented important classroom practices, it often remained constrained by the assumption that languages were separate systems between which speakers alternated. Consequently, code-switching was frequently framed as an exception to monolingual norms rather than a legitimate communicative practice in its own right.

2.3 Translanguaging Theory

More recent scholarship has moved beyond code-switching frameworks towards translanguaging theory. Translanguaging was initially developed in Welsh bilingual education contexts but has since expanded into a broader theoretical framework for understanding bilingual communication and learning. According to Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014), bilingual individuals do not operate with separate language systems, but instead draw upon a unified linguistic repertoire.

This perspective represents a significant shift from traditional views of bilingualism. Rather than treating Arabic and English as isolated systems, translanguaging theory emphasises the fluid mobilisation of all available linguistic resources to construct meaning and facilitate communication. Within educational settings, translanguaging is therefore understood not as interference, but as a natural and productive aspect of learning.

Pedagogical translanguaging has also emerged as an important concept within bilingual education research. Jasone Cenoz (2017) argues that teachers can intentionally design classroom activities that strategically integrate multiple languages to support learning outcomes. Similarly, Suresh Canagarajah (2013) emphasises the importance of translanguaging competence, where learners flexibly negotiate meaning across linguistic boundaries.

Translanguaging theory is closely aligned with sociocultural perspectives on learning, particularly the work of Lev Vygotsky. From this perspective, language functions as a mediational tool that supports cognitive development. The learners' L1 can therefore scaffold understanding and facilitate access to more complex linguistic concepts in the target language.

More recent developments in translanguaging scholarship have further expanded the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of the field beyond bilingual interaction towards broader questions of identity, multimodality, equity, and classroom practice. Li Wei (2018) conceptualised translanguaging as a "practical theory of language," arguing that multilingual speakers draw upon integrated semiotic repertoires rather than bounded linguistic systems. This perspective positions translanguaging not simply as a communicative strategy, but as a dynamic process through which multilingual individuals construct meaning across linguistic, cultural, and social boundaries. Subsequent work has further conceptualised translanguaging as a "space of simultaneity," where multilingual meaning-making emerges through the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic resources (Li Wei, 2023).

At the same time, García and colleagues have increasingly focused on pedagogical translanguaging within classroom contexts. García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) argue that

translanguaging pedagogy enables multilingual learners to access academic content while simultaneously developing linguistic flexibility and learner agency. More recent classroom-based work by García and Kleyn (2020) further emphasises translanguaging as a means of promoting inclusion, participation, and epistemic access within multilingual educational settings. Rather than viewing learners' home languages as obstacles to English acquisition, this perspective conceptualises multilingualism itself as a pedagogical resource capable of supporting deeper learning and classroom engagement.

2.4 Translanguaging in Saudi Arabian EFL Contexts

Research examining translanguaging practices within Saudi Arabia remains relatively limited. English language education in Saudi Arabia has traditionally been shaped by English-only instructional policies, particularly within higher education institutions. However, several studies suggest that Arabic continues to play a significant role in classroom interaction despite official restrictions.

Alshammari (2011) reported that Saudi EFL teachers frequently used Arabic to explain grammar, introduce vocabulary, and maintain classroom rapport. Similarly, Mahboob and Elyas (2014) argued that English language education within Saudi Arabia cannot be separated from broader sociocultural and ideological considerations. The persistence of English-only policies often reflects assumptions about linguistic authenticity rather than evidence-based pedagogical practice.

Recent educational reforms associated with Saudi Vision 2030 have intensified focus on English language development as part of broader economic modernisation strategies. However, while educational policy emphasises improving English proficiency, there remains limited discussion surrounding how multilingual pedagogical approaches might contribute to these goals.

Most importantly, there remains a lack of empirical research within Saudi Arabia examining measurable learning outcomes associated with translanguaging practices. Much of the existing literature focuses primarily on attitudes and perceptions rather than assessing whether translanguaging influences language development. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of translanguaging-informed instruction on grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

2.5 Translanguaging in Gulf Arab EMI Contexts

In recent years, translanguaging research within Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) contexts has expanded considerably, particularly in relation to English-medium instruction (EMI) in higher education. This growth reflects broader sociolinguistic realities across Gulf states, where multilingualism and linguistic hybridity increasingly characterise university environments despite the continued dominance of English-only instructional policies. Recent scholarship argues that translanguaging practices frequently emerge naturally within EMI classrooms as students and teachers negotiate comprehension, identity, and participation through flexible movement between Arabic and English.

A growing body of GCC-focused research has highlighted tensions between institutional monolingual ideologies and actual classroom practices. Hopkyns (2022), for example, argues that translanguaging within Gulf EMI settings enables students to utilise their full linguistic repertoires while simultaneously strengthening learner identity and engagement. Similarly, Aldaghri's (2024) study of Saudi EMI classrooms identified planned and unplanned translanguaging strategies used by instructors to scaffold understanding and facilitate academic participation.

Recent scoping reviews further demonstrate that translanguaging research in GCC higher education has increased significantly over the last decade, particularly within Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. However, most existing studies remain qualitative and perception-based, focusing primarily on teacher beliefs, classroom discourse, or learner

identity. Empirical investigations measuring actual language learning outcomes associated with translanguaging practices remain comparatively limited.

Furthermore, several Gulf studies have noted that translanguaging should not necessarily be viewed as a universal solution to all EMI challenges. Rather, its effectiveness appears highly dependent on classroom context, learner proficiency, institutional ideology, and teacher implementation strategies. This highlights the importance of context-sensitive research capable of examining both learner perceptions and measurable educational outcomes within specific Saudi Arabian EFL environments.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component employed a quasi-experimental design involving two EFL classes: one English-only classroom and one translanguaging-informed classroom where Arabic was strategically incorporated into instruction. The qualitative component consisted of a learner questionnaire examining perceptions towards the use of Arabic in the classroom.

The mixed methods approach was selected because it enabled both measurable learning outcomes and learner perceptions to be explored simultaneously. This was important given that previous research within this area has often relied exclusively on attitudinal data without examining actual learner performance.

3.2 Participants and Context

The study involved sixty male preparatory-year EFL students enrolled at a Saudi university. The exclusive inclusion of male participants reflected institutional and cultural research access considerations within the Saudi higher education context, where gender-segregated educational environments remain common. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the context of male Saudi EFL learners and may not necessarily be directly transferable to female educational settings, where classroom interactional practices, learner participation patterns, and translanguaging experiences may differ.

The study was conducted at a government-funded university in Saudi Arabia involving sixty male preparatory year students aged between 18 and 20 years old. Participants were enrolled in pre-intermediate English classes following placement testing administered by the institution. The preparatory year programme represented an intensive English learning environment in which students attended approximately eighteen hours of English instruction per week.

Two instructors participated in the study. One instructor was a native English speaker who did not speak Arabic and therefore conducted all lessons exclusively in English. The second instructor was bilingual and strategically incorporated Arabic when introducing new vocabulary and grammar concepts. Both instructors possessed comparable teaching experience and academic qualifications.

3.3 Instructional Procedures

Both classes followed the same institutional pacing guide and used the same instructional materials from the *English Unlimited* textbook series. The intervention lasted for seven weeks.

The translanguaging-informed class incorporated Arabic selectively when:

3. introducing new vocabulary
4. explaining grammar
5. clarifying instructions
6. checking learner understanding

The English-only class followed institutional policy prohibiting the use of Arabic.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The application for ethical approval was submitted to both the University of Exeter and the participating institution prior to the commencement of the project. Both institutions granted approval. Full ethical documentation is included in Appendix E.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collected and analysed for the current research project comprised a questionnaire and results from three grammar and vocabulary quizzes. There were a total of 31 items in the questionnaire regarding the use of L1 in the EFL classroom and what past experience the participant students had with their L1 being used in the English classroom. Respondents were asked to select answers based on a five-point Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Usually, Often, Always). Both participant classes were tested for grammar and vocabulary at three intervals: prior to the module starting, mid-module, and at the end of the module.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS through mixed-design repeated measures ANOVA. The independent variables were the instructional condition and the time interval. The dependent variable consisted of quiz scores. Questionnaire data were analysed descriptively to identify patterns in learner perceptions.

4. Findings

4.1 Questionnaire Findings

Questionnaire findings reflected learners' experiences across different educational stages. Responses concerning school-level English learning experiences (e.g., Q4–Q10) referred to earlier educational contexts, whereas responses regarding university practices (Q11–Q15) reflected participants' current preparatory-year instruction. Consequently, variation between school and university language practices was expected. The main trends from the questionnaire are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1

Questionnaire Summary — English Only Class (n = 30)

Questions	Percentage	Summary of Student Responses
Q4	65%	Students started learning English in primary school.
Q8 & Q9	33%	English teachers at school 'usually/always' used Arabic to teach new vocabulary and give instructions.
Q11	80%	University teachers 'never' used Arabic to teach grammar.
Q12 & Q13	60%	Teacher 'rarely' used Arabic to teach new vocabulary and 'rarely' gave instructions in Arabic.
Q25	67%	Students said they 'always' understood new vocabulary better when it was translated into Arabic.
Q29	67%	Using Arabic in the classroom 'never' hinders their L2 learning.

Table 2

Questionnaire Summary — L1 Incorporated Class (n = 30)

Questions	Percentage	Summary of Student Responses
Q4	65%	Students started learning English in primary school.
Q7	81%	English teachers at school 'always' used Arabic to teach new vocabulary.
Q8	63%	Instructions given in the English class were also 'always' in Arabic.
Q11	54%	University teachers 'rarely' used Arabic to teach grammar.
Q25	72%	Students said they 'always' understood new vocabulary better when it was translated into Arabic.
Q27	72%	Classroom instructions must 'always' be given in their L1.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

SPSS was used to reveal any patterns or differences in performance between both classes. The test results for both classes were analysed using mixed-design (repeated measures) ANOVA. The independent variable was the time interval at which the performance of both classes was measured. The dependent variable was the quiz results.

In terms of performance of both classes over time, there was no statistically significant difference between groups. The Tests of Within-Subjects Effects showed a significance value of .000 for the main effect of time, indicating significant improvement within subjects across time intervals. The Time \times Class interaction showed a significance value of .115, indicating that the changes in performance over time were not significantly different between the two groups across the three quizzes. The Tests of Between-Subjects Effects revealed no statistically significant difference between classes ($p = .856$), indicating that the quiz performances of both classes, averaged across time, were equivalent.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Both the English Only and L1 Incorporated Classes (N = 60). Class 1 = English Only; Class 2 = L1 Incorporated.

Time	Class 1: M	Class 1: SD	Class 1: N	Class 2: M	Class 2: SD	Class 2: N	Total: M	Total: SD	Total: N
Test 1	1.91	1.97	30	2.35	2.16	30	2.15	2.07	60
Test 2	5.30	2.31	30	4.64	2.19	30	4.95	2.25	60
Test 3	7.53	1.44	30	7.53	1.44	30	7.53	1.41	60

As shown in Table 3, Class 2 (L1 Incorporated) performed slightly better than Class 1 (English Only) on Test 1. Class 1 performed slightly better on Test 2, and both classes achieved identical mean scores on Test 3. The ANOVA results are presented in the tables below.

Table 4

Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Time	Pillai's Trace	.867	186.245b	2.000	57.000	.000	.867	372.490	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.133	186.245b	2.000	57.000	.000	.867	372.490	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	6.535	186.245b	2.000	57.000	.000	.867	372.490	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	6.535	186.245b	2.000	57.000	.000	.867	372.490	1.000
Time * Class	Pillai's Trace	.078	2.395b	2.000	57.000	.100	.078	4.791	.464
	Wilks' Lambda	.922	2.395b	2.000	57.000	.100	.078	4.791	.464
	Hotelling's Trace	.084	2.395b	2.000	57.000	.100	.078	4.791	.464
	Roy's Largest Root	.084	2.395b	2.000	57.000	.100	.078	4.791	.464

a. Design: Intercept + Class; Within Subjects Design: Time. b. Exact statistic. c. Computed using alpha = .05

Table 5

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects (Measure: MEASURE_1)

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Source	Assumption	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Time	Sphericity Assumed	871.165	2	435.582	205.432	.000	.780	410.864	1.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	871.165	1.979	440.123	205.432	.000	.780	406.625	1.000
	Huynh-Feldt	871.165	2.000	435.582	205.432	.000	.780	410.864	1.000
	Lower-bound	871.165	1.000	871.165	205.432	.000	.780	205.432	1.000
Time * Class	Sphericity Assumed	9.331	2	4.666	2.200	.115	.037	4.401	.442
	Greenhouse-Geisser	9.331	1.979	4.714	2.200	.116	.037	4.355	.439
	Huynh-Feldt	9.331	2.000	4.666	2.200	.115	.037	4.401	.442
	Lower-bound	9.331	1.000	9.331	2.200	.143	.037	2.200	.308
Error(Time)	Sphericity Assumed	245.958	116	2.120					
	Greenhouse-Geisser	245.958	114.803	2.142					
	Huynh-Feldt	245.958	116.000	2.120					
	Lower-bound	245.958	58.000	4.241					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Table 6

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts (Measure: MEASURE_1)

Source	Time	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Time	Linear	870.408	1	870.408	376.579	.000	.867	376.579	1.000
	Quadratic	.757	1	.757	.392	.534	.007	.392	.094
Time * Class	Linear	1.533	1	1.533	.663	.419	.011	.663	.126
	Quadratic	7.798	1	7.798	4.042	.049	.065	4.042	.507
Error(Time)	Linear	134.059	58	2.311					
	Quadratic	111.899	58	1.929					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Table 7

Estimated Marginal Means: Class × Time (Measure: MEASURE_1)

Class	Time	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Class 1 (English Only)	1 (Pre)	1.911	.393	1.124	2.697
	2 (Mid)	5.304	.426	4.451	6.156
	3 (Post)	7.536	.269	6.997	8.074
Class 2 (L1 Incorporated)	1 (Pre)	2.359	.367	1.624	3.095
	2 (Mid)	4.641	.398	3.844	5.438
	3 (Post)	7.531	.252	7.028	8.035

5. Results and Discussion

The findings revealed significant improvement across both groups over time. However, no statistically significant difference emerged between the English-only and translanguaging-

informed classes overall. Both groups demonstrated improvement in grammar and vocabulary performance throughout the seven-week module.

Nevertheless, the translanguaging-informed group demonstrated slightly stronger performance during earlier stages of the study, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. Learners frequently reported that Arabic translations enabled them to understand new vocabulary more efficiently and reduced confusion when encountering unfamiliar concepts.

Questionnaire findings revealed overwhelmingly positive learner attitudes towards the use of Arabic in EFL classrooms. A large proportion of learners stated that they understood vocabulary more effectively when translations were provided in Arabic. Students also reported that Arabic helped them feel more comfortable participating in classroom interaction and reduced anxiety associated with communicating exclusively in English.

These findings align with translanguaging theory, which conceptualises bilingual learners as drawing upon integrated linguistic repertoires rather than operating through separated language systems. Arabic appeared to function as a mediational tool supporting comprehension and facilitating engagement with new linguistic content.

The findings also align with García and Kleyn's (2020) argument that translanguaging pedagogies can promote more inclusive classroom environments by legitimising learners' full linguistic repertoires. In the present study, learners frequently described feeling more confident and engaged when Arabic was strategically incorporated into instruction. This suggests that translanguaging may function not only as a cognitive scaffold, but also as an affective and participatory resource capable of enhancing learner agency within Saudi EFL classrooms.

At the same time, some learners expressed concern that excessive use of Arabic could potentially reduce opportunities for English practice. This reflects ongoing tensions between monolingual ideologies and multilingual classroom realities. Importantly, the findings suggest that translanguaging does not hinder English development when used strategically and purposefully.

The results also carry important implications within the context of Saudi Vision 2030. As Saudi educational institutions seek to improve English language outcomes, evidence-based pedagogical approaches become increasingly important. The findings suggest that rigid English-only policies may not necessarily produce superior outcomes compared to more flexible translanguaging-informed approaches.

6. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the study involved two different instructors across the instructional conditions. The English-only classroom was taught by a native English-speaking instructor who did not speak Arabic, whereas the translanguaging-informed classroom was taught by a bilingual instructor who strategically incorporated Arabic into instruction. Consequently, it is difficult to isolate whether observed performance patterns were influenced primarily by the instructional approach itself or by differences in teacher characteristics, teaching style, linguistic background, or classroom interactional practices. Future studies should therefore attempt to control for teacher effects more systematically, for example by having the same instructor teach both instructional conditions.

A second limitation concerns the qualitative component of the study. While interviews were initially proposed as part of the research design in order to provide deeper insight into learner experiences and perceptions, these interviews were ultimately not conducted. As a result, the study relied primarily on questionnaire data to examine learner attitudes towards translanguaging practices. Although the questionnaire provided useful descriptive insights, the absence of interview data limited the depth of qualitative analysis and restricted opportunities to explore learners' experiences in greater detail.

A further limitation relates to participant demographics. The study involved only male preparatory-year students, reflecting institutional access considerations and the gender-segregated nature of Saudi higher education contexts. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted specifically within the context of male Saudi EFL learners and may not necessarily be transferable to female educational settings. Previous research has suggested that classroom interaction patterns and learner participation may differ across male and female educational environments in Saudi Arabia. Future research should therefore examine translanguaging practices within female Saudi EFL classrooms in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of multilingual pedagogy across Saudi higher education contexts.

Additionally, the relatively short duration of the study limited the extent to which long-term effects of translanguaging-informed instruction could be examined. The focus on grammar and vocabulary also restricts the generalisability of the findings to other language skills such as speaking and writing. Future longitudinal research involving larger and more diverse participant samples would therefore provide further insight into the long-term pedagogical implications of translanguaging within Saudi EFL classrooms.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the role of translanguaging practices within Saudi Arabian EFL classrooms, focusing specifically on grammar and vocabulary development among preparatory-year learners. The findings revealed no statistically significant differences between the English-only and translanguaging-informed instructional groups. However, descriptive performance patterns suggested that learners in the translanguaging-informed classroom performed at least comparably to those in the English-only condition, particularly in vocabulary-related assessments. Questionnaire findings further indicated generally positive learner perceptions towards the strategic use of Arabic in English language instruction.

Rather than demonstrating the superiority of translanguaging over English-only instruction, the findings suggest that translanguaging-informed pedagogy may function as a non-inferior instructional approach within Saudi EFL classrooms. Importantly, the incorporation of Arabic did not appear to hinder learners' English language development, despite the persistence of monolingual assumptions that frequently position the L1 as a barrier to acquisition. These findings therefore challenge rigid English-only ideologies by suggesting that strategic use of learners' L1 can coexist with successful English language learning outcomes.

The study also contributes to the growing body of translanguaging research within Gulf Arab educational contexts, where empirical investigations examining measurable learning outcomes remain relatively limited. Within the broader framework of Saudi Vision 2030, the findings highlight the importance of adopting evidence-based and context-sensitive pedagogical approaches capable of responding to learners' linguistic realities while supporting English language development.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously given the limitations of the study, including teacher effects across instructional conditions, the absence of interview data, the relatively short duration of the intervention, and the exclusively male participant sample. Future research should therefore continue examining translanguaging practices across different Saudi educational contexts, particularly through longitudinal and mixed-methods designs involving both male and female learners.

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