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**UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
TRANSLANGUAGING AS A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY IN ESL
CLASSROOMS**



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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in graduate-level ESL classrooms by using a quantitative research approach. Translanguaging encourages learners to draw on multiple languages flexibly to support meaning-making and learning. Despite growing interest in translanguaging, limited empirical evidence exists regarding its classroom use in graduate-level ESL contexts in Pakistan. The study aimed to obtain teachers' perspectives of translanguaging and its perceived impact on learning outcomes. Data was collected from 30 ESL teachers through structured questionnaire. Responses were analysed using descriptive statistics to evaluate attitudes toward translanguaging practices and their perceived effectiveness in ESL classrooms. The theoretical foundation of the study is based upon Dynamic Model of Translanguaging by Garcia and Wei (2014). The results indicate that the majority of teachers perceive translanguaging as an effective strategy that enhances understanding, participation, and learner confidence. However, a small proportion of respondents expressed reservations about its implementation. The study recommends that although translanguaging is largely beneficial in graduate ESL contexts, careful planning and teacher guidance are essential to maximize its effectiveness. Overall, the study aligns with multilingual pedagogical approaches in advanced language instruction.

Keywords: Dynamic Model of Translanguaging, ESL Context, Pedagogical Strategy, Translanguaging

Introduction

Garcia (2009) defined translanguaging as the process of using different linguistic systems or approaches. The concepts such as knowledge of language as a fixed, decontextualized, bounded, and historical system are negated by the proponents translanguaging, which instead emphasises discursive resources, linguistic repertoires, and communicative practices. In order to accomplish this, translanguaging shifts the analytical emphasis from languages and structures to speakers and their behaviours throughout the processes of meaning-making identity negotiation (Makalela, 2019; Lin, 2019). According to Guzula et al. (2016), translanguaging views language as a collection of characteristics that are located in social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. Instead of being constrained by the social constructs of named languages, speakers strategically use various facets of their linguistic repertoires to accomplish their communicative and identity building goals in a particular setting.

Teachers utilize translanguaging to give students more communication opportunities and to help them understand what they are learning. Students can also use translanguaging to express their opinions to teachers during classroom discussions. Interaction of teachers and students enhances via translanguaging because it reduces the amount of time teachers spend trying to explain things to students or searching for the simplest word to elaborate the concept that may emerge in the ESL teaching process. Translanguaging helps to build the flow of teachers and students interactions in the classroom.

English language teachers often rely on already acquired linguistic rules for learning of English in a multilingual classroom. Use of translanguaging augment the second language learning process. English language teachers use translanguaging as a communication strategy for students with inadequate vocabulary resources. Recent studies suggest translanguaging an important part for

learning a second language. The ability of the speaker to switch between two languages could be a significant skill in ESL acquisition. The current study's objectives are to determine teachers' attitudes regarding the use of translanguage as a teaching and learning tool at university level. When students learn English language with the aid of their mother language, it helps them better understand their academic concepts. This study might assist teachers to modify their teaching techniques in ESL settings.

English is an academic lingua franca and the spark of the language has permeated in every stratum of society. Mastering English is inevitable in today's globalised world. Acquisition of ESL has become need of the hour, especially in countries where English is using as a second language. Learning it is not only a status symbol but also necessary for successful career (Cook, 2001). Pakistani students need four language skills that are necessary for gaining competency in language. These four skills are reading, writing, speaking and listening. Even though English is widely acknowledged to be important in Pakistan at all levels, it is still regarded as a challenging subject to master in rural areas. The factors influencing ESL acquisition in Pakistan can be divided into two classes: internal elements, or those which a learner brings to a particular learning context such as age, personality, motivation, experience, cognition and mother tongue; and external factors, which include curriculum, instruction, culture, status and access to native speakers. Putman (2011) noted that learning a language cannot be learnt in vacuum because it is essentially a social activity that requires interlocutors.

Research Objective

- To investigate teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of translanguage as a pedagogical strategy in ESL classrooms at graduate level.

Significance of the Study

This research has significance because it adds to the expanding research that deals with the translanguage approach in ESL classrooms, specifically at the graduate level in higher education. Although translanguage has received considerable attention in the international literature, there is very little empirical research in multilingual Southern Punjab contexts, particularly on teachers' perspectives and practices of translanguage in ESL classrooms. The study also emphasizes the teachers' perspectives, offering insights into the realities of the classroom, the challenges they faced in their teaching, and the practical implications of translanguage for language learning. It assists in understanding of flexible use of multiple languages in enhancing learners' comprehension, participation and confidence in ESL contexts. This study's findings will be applicable to ESL teachers, curriculum developers, and policy makers to create more inclusive and linguistically responsive teaching practices. Furthermore, it emphasises the role of the linguistic repertoire in the classroom for pedagogical purposes, which is a call to action against the principle of monolingualism in the classroom. The study also has implications for teacher education in which teacher preparation programs should focus on preparing teachers for multilingual pedagogies. In general, this study contributes to the literature as it introduces the concept of translanguage into the context of higher education in Pakistan and justifies its use in enhancing ESL teaching and learning outcomes.

Literature Review

The importance of using learners' complete language repertoire is a salient issue in multilingual educational settings, particularly in ESL classrooms. One such strategy is that of translanguage, which questions the hegemony of monolingual teaching and uses more than one language freely in the context of learning. The idea of translanguage was first described in the context of Welsh bilingual education by Williams (1994), who used it to describe the use of translations between languages for input and output. Garcia's work and her colleagues, however, has greatly extended the theoretical framework of translanguage. Translanguage is the flexible and dynamic process of bilingual or multilingual learners using more than one language to make meaning, to learn, and to communicate effectively (García & Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging does not necessarily mean having two separate language systems; rather, language is seen as a repertoire rather than two bounded systems. García and Wei (2014) believe that translanguaging is a communicative strategy and it is also a cognitive and pedagogical process that improves meaning-making and knowledge construction. Pedagogically, translanguaging enables language learners to use their full linguistic repertoire to access academic content, which leads to more in-depth understanding and engagement. In addition, translanguaging is a natural language practice and inclusive learning strategy, as stated by Li Wei (2018).

Translanguaging has become more relevant in ESL classrooms because of the multilingual backgrounds of the learners. While the traditional approaches to ESL education may encourage English-only teaching methods, it has been argued that this approach does not enable the student to think in the target language and fails to acknowledge the students' linguistic identity.

According to García and Kleyn (2016), translanguaging in the classroom helps students to understand complex academic texts better because it can serve as a scaffold in the students' first language. Translanguaging offers an equitable place to participate in a learning environment where learners' English proficiency varies, particularly in ESL contexts at higher education levels.

Furthermore, translanguaging is in line with the sociocultural theories of learning, such as Vygotsky's theory of mediation in which language is used as a means for cognitive development. The ability to move back and forth between languages empowers students to develop a better understanding and knowledge building.

Translanguaging can be used in graduate-level ESL classes where there is a linguistic challenge to acquiring academic texts and can be utilized to span gaps between prior knowledge and new knowledge. It also facilitates collaborative learning as it allows for interaction with peers about the linguistic resources they have. There are several main benefits to translanguaging, one of which is increased comprehension. Research indicates that using one's first language in addition to English will improve the comprehension of complex academic language (García & Wei, 2014). This is especially critical in ESL situations where learners might find abstract concepts difficult.

Secondly, translanguaging leads to higher engagement in the classroom. When students were given the opportunity to use their whole linguistic repertoire, Probyn (2015) discovered that the learners in the multilingual classrooms were more inclined to participate. This results in a more participatory and diverse learning atmosphere.

There are some challenges to translanguaging, however, even though it has its advantages. A major concern is that the first language might be overused and may restrict access to English input. Some teachers are concerned that overusing L1 could affect the learning of English, especially in immersion settings for ESL instruction. Classroom management is also a challenge. Teachers might find it difficult to keep the class on track, and to make sure all students have an equal opportunity to participate in the class when multiple languages are spoken in the classroom.

Another key problem is teacher preparedness. Many ESL teachers are monolingual teachers who have not been trained in translanguaging pedagogies (García & Kleyn, 2016). The implementation of translanguaging practices may be unstructured and inconsistent if not properly trained.

Pedagogical implications of translanguaging in ESL and bilingual contexts have been investigated by several studies. For example, García and Wei (2014) cite examples of translanguaging in bilingual classes helping students to engage and comprehend.

In the study by Probyn (2015), she found that translanguaging enabled teachers to explain complex concepts and provided more opportunities for students to participate in their classrooms. But the study also revealed some conflict between policy constraints and classroom practice.

Likewise, Cenoz and Gorter (2017) studied the issues of multilingualism in Europe and found that translanguaging facilitates more profound cognitive involvement and linguistic flexibility. They claim

that pedagogical translanguageing should be planned and made systematic in the curriculum design, not merely informal.

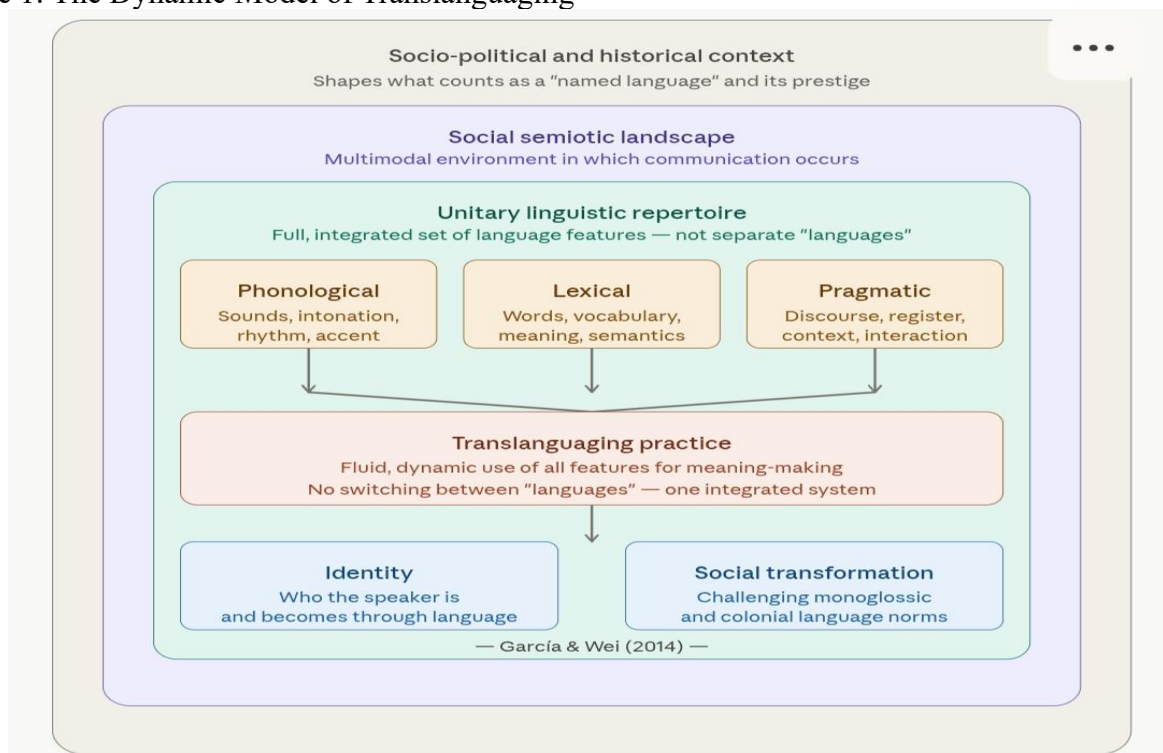
However, research is still quite limited at the higher education level, especially in South Asian contexts where English is an additional language. This is important as graduate-level learners often have advanced academic literacy demands. Thus, empirical studies on the experiences and perceptions of translanguageing in these contexts are needed.

Research Methodology

The study used a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the use of translanguageing as a pedagogical strategy in ESL classrooms. The population of the study comprised ESL teachers teaching at the graduate level in universities across Southern Punjab. The sample consisted of 30 ESL teachers who were available and interested in taking part in the study and were easily accessible. A self-developed questionnaire with 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was used for data collection. The questionnaire aimed to offer insights into teachers' beliefs about the use and pedagogical significance of translanguageing in ESL settings. The instrument was created from the literature that is found and the theoretical framework of García and Wei's (2014) *Dynamic Model of Translanguageing*. The questionnaire was reviewed by the experts in Applied Linguistics and language education and changes were made based on their suggestions to make the content valid. Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument that gave the coefficient of 0.70 that means the instrument has acceptable internal consistency. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, means were used to analyse the collected data. The ethical aspect was taken into account during the entire research process. The aims of the study were briefed to the participants, participation was voluntary, informed consent was given before the data was collected and confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were ensured. Data gathered was only for study and research purpose.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1: The Dynamic Model of Translanguageing

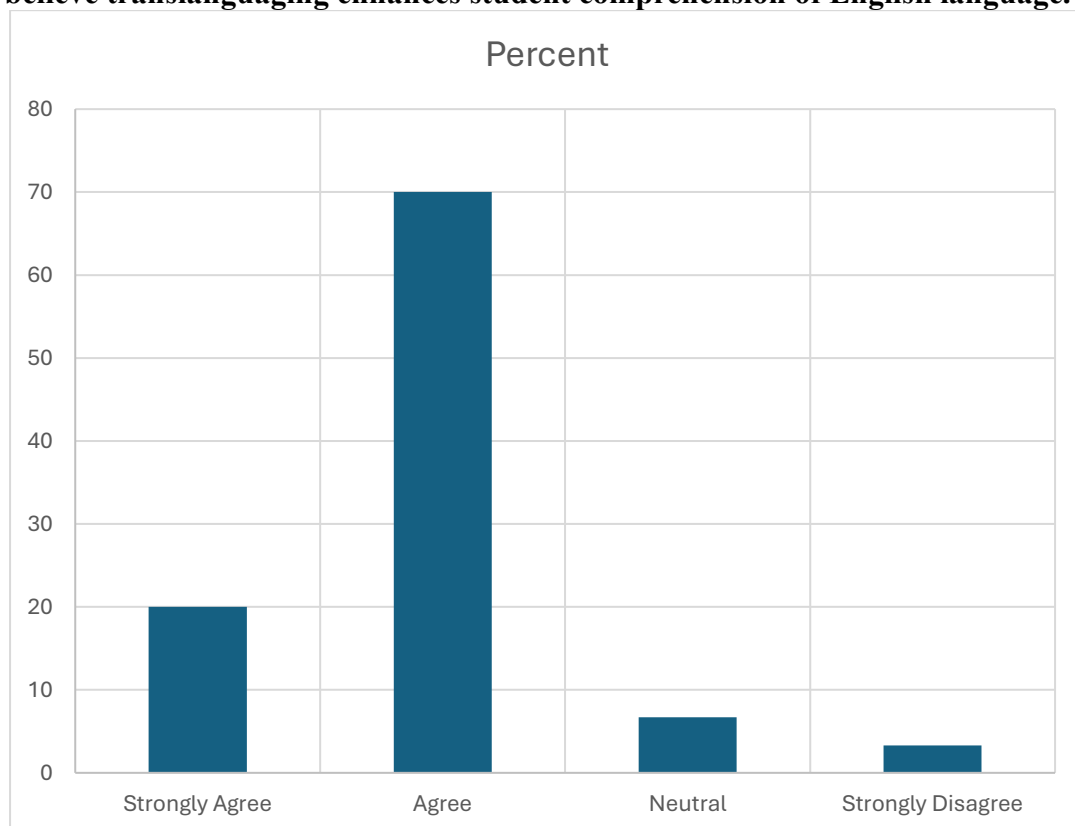


The Dynamic Model of Translanguaging (García & Wei 2014) suggests that multilingual speakers are not bilingual or multilingual with two or more separate, discrete language systems that are stored in parallel; rather, they have one integrated language system from which they access the language(s) they need to produce meaning. Translanguaging, rather than switching, between languages, is a natural and seamless utilization of phonological, lexical, pragmatic, and semiotic features, as needed for the communicative context. This repertoire, like all other kinds, is always situated within a more extensive socio-political discourse that privileges the prestige and legitimacy of certain named languages (English, French) and disparages others. For García and Wei, these named languages have no meaning, they are social constructs and what actually exists is the speaker's constantly changing repertoire of resources. Translanguaging practice is thus not a symptom of lack of mastery of either language, but is an advanced, agency-driven interaction that at the same time creates and disrupts speaker identities and the monoglossic ideologies that equate multilingualism with deviation from a norm of a single language.

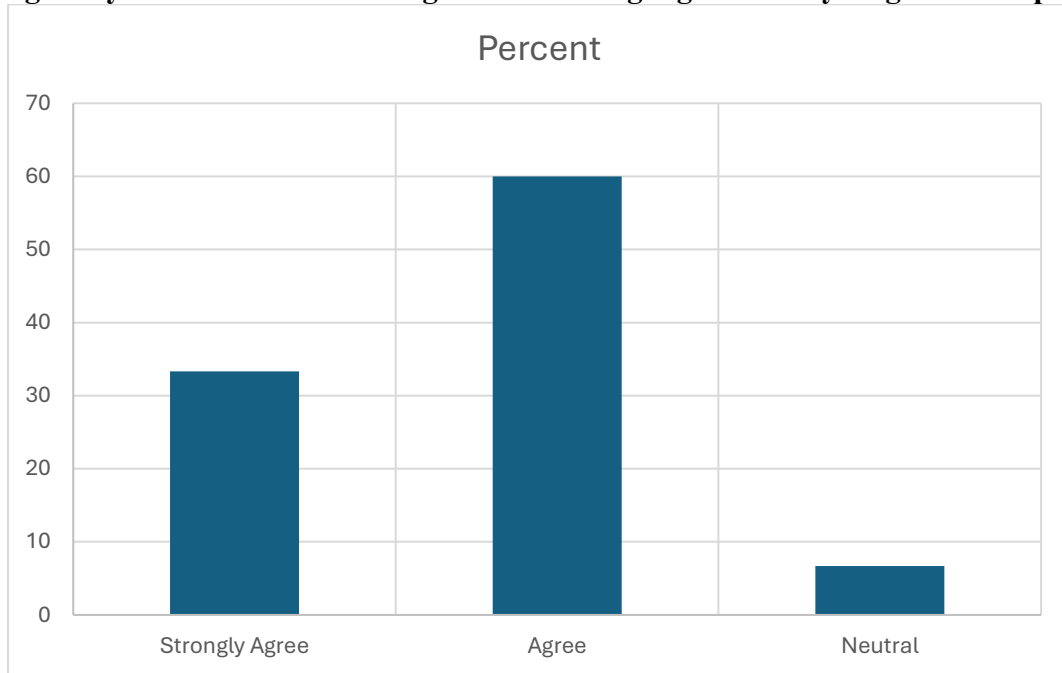
Findings and Discussion

This section outlines the results and discussion of the data gathered from 30 ESL teachers on the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in ESL graduate classrooms. The responses were gathered by 15 questions on the 5-point likert scale. The collected data were analysed by descriptive statistics and the result is presented by percentage on each questionnaire item and graphically. The analysis showcases teachers' perception of roles and ways in which translanguaging can improve language learning, classroom participation, understanding, and effectiveness of instruction. The following is a schematic representation on each item to gain a better understanding of the views of the respondents and to connect the results with the literature on the topic of translanguaging in an ESL context.

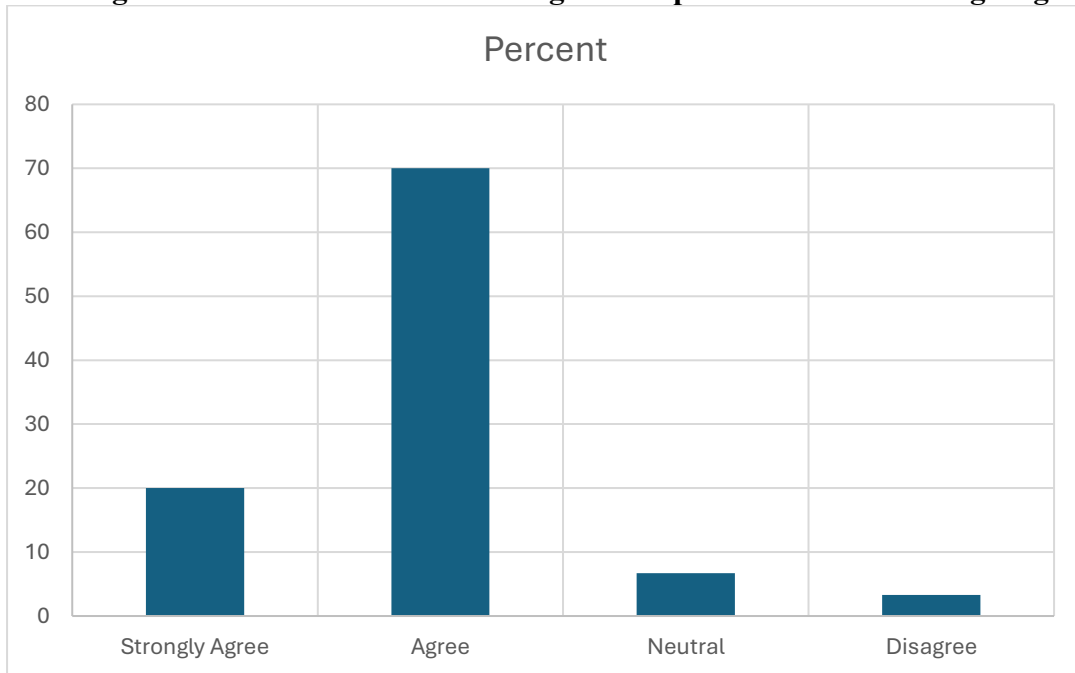
1. I believe translanguaging enhances student comprehension of English language.



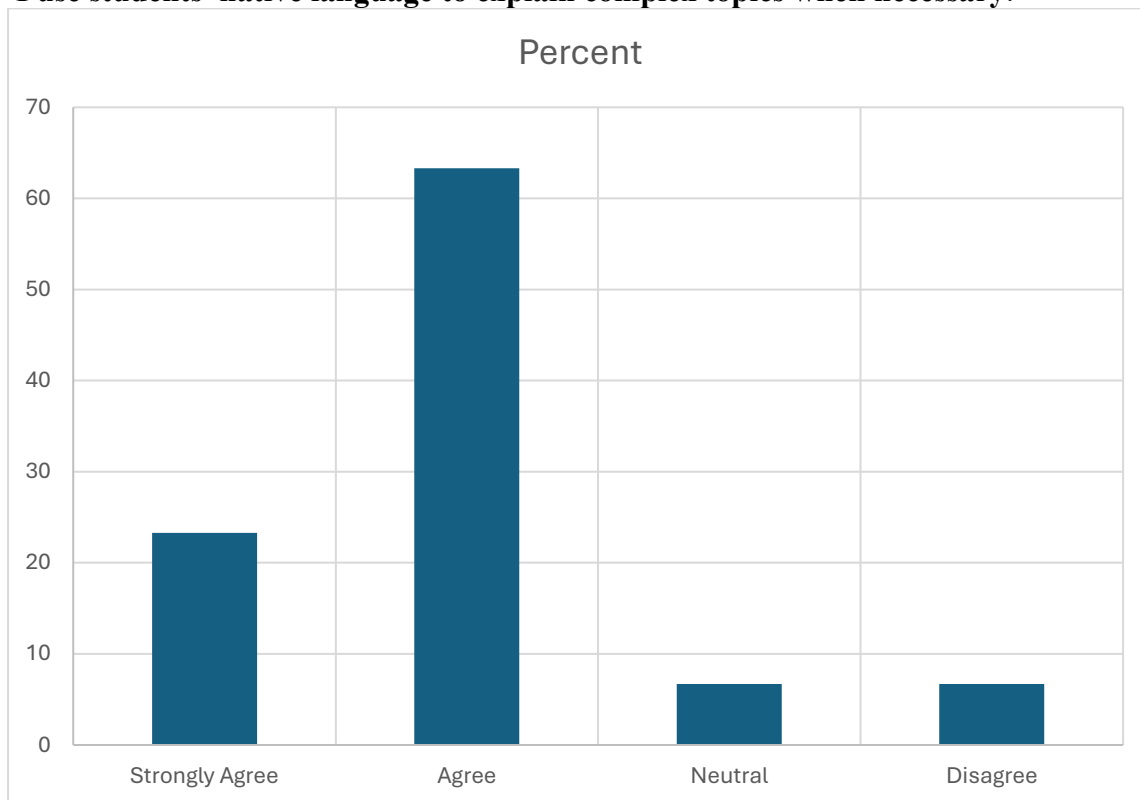
2. **I regularly observe students using their first language to clarify English concepts.**



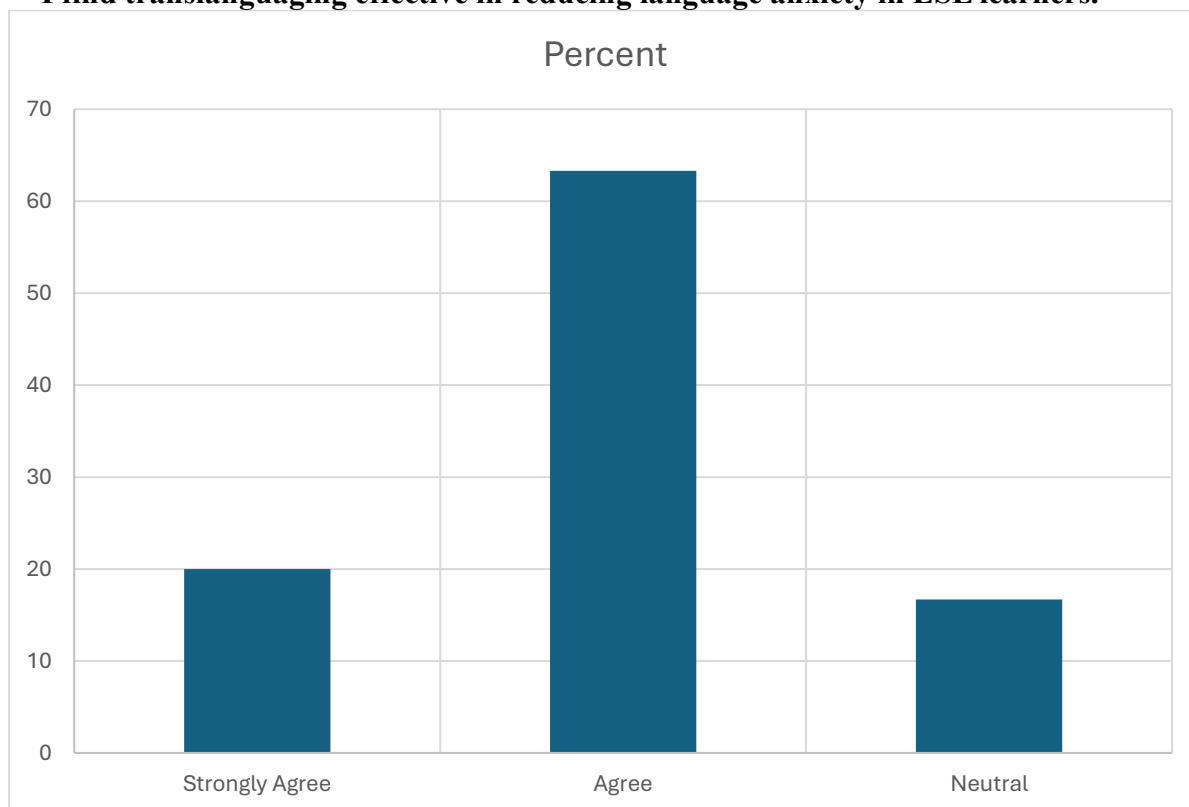
3. **I encourage students to draw their full linguistic repertoire when learning English.**



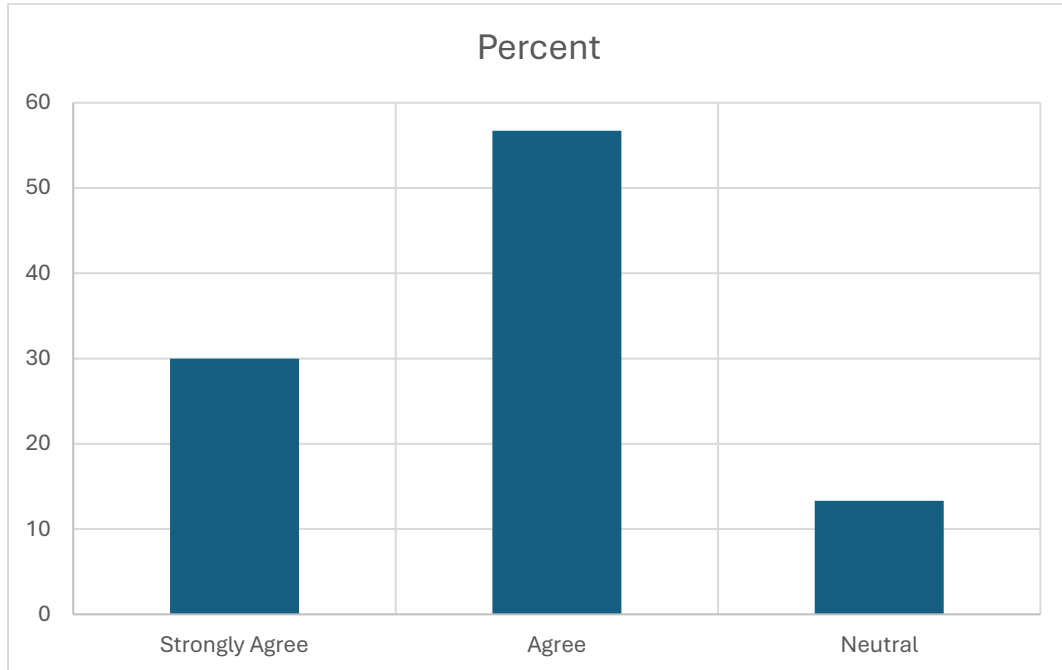
4. I use students' native language to explain complex topics when necessary.



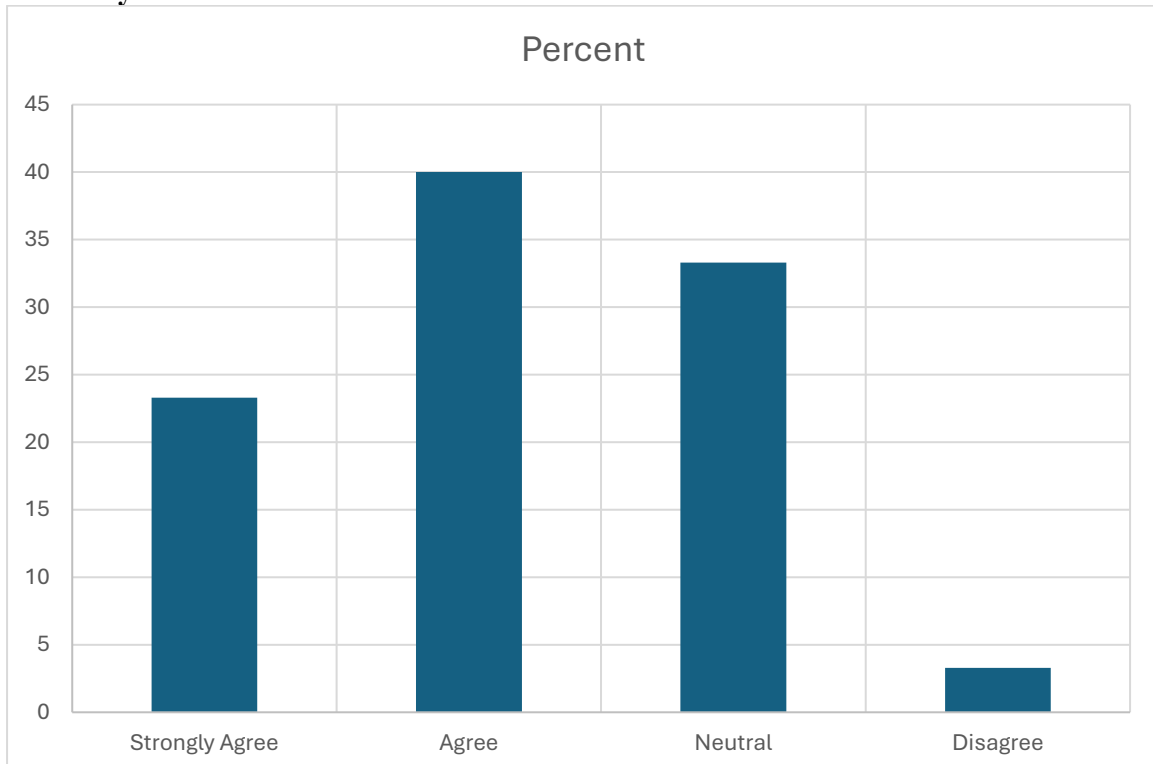
5. I find translanguaging effective in reducing language anxiety in ESL learners.



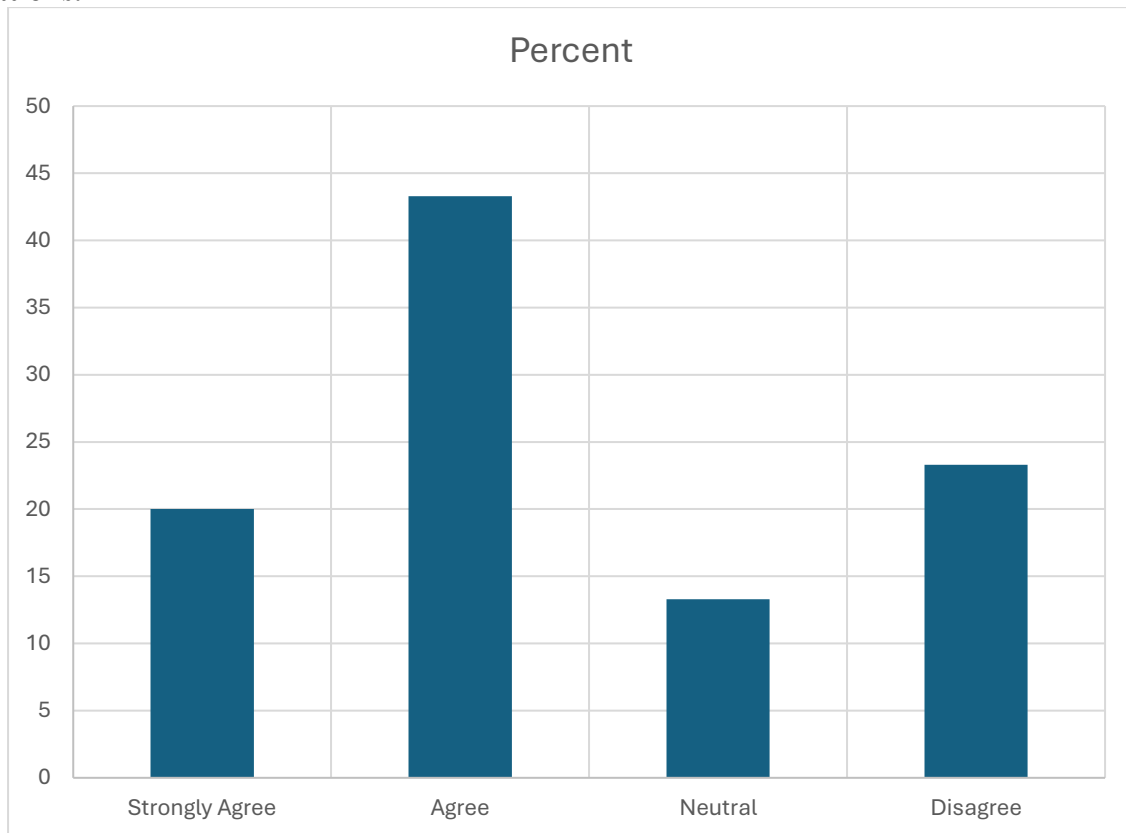
6. Some students over-rely on their first language and avoid taking risks in English.



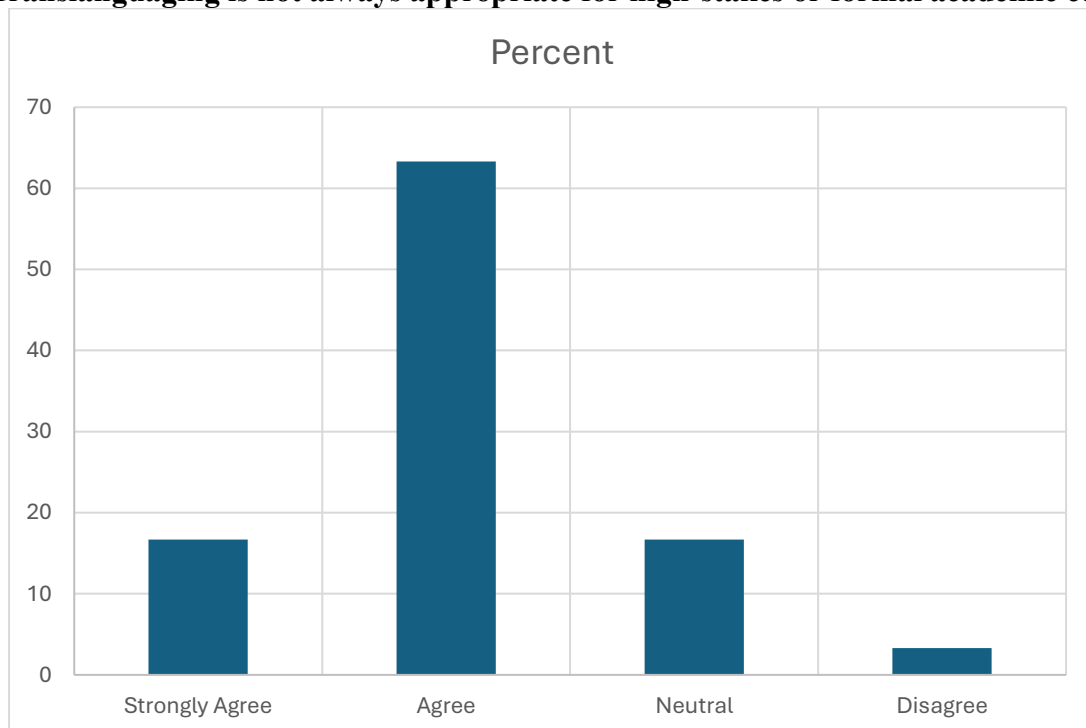
7. I have observed that translanguaging sometimes slow down student' development of English fluency.



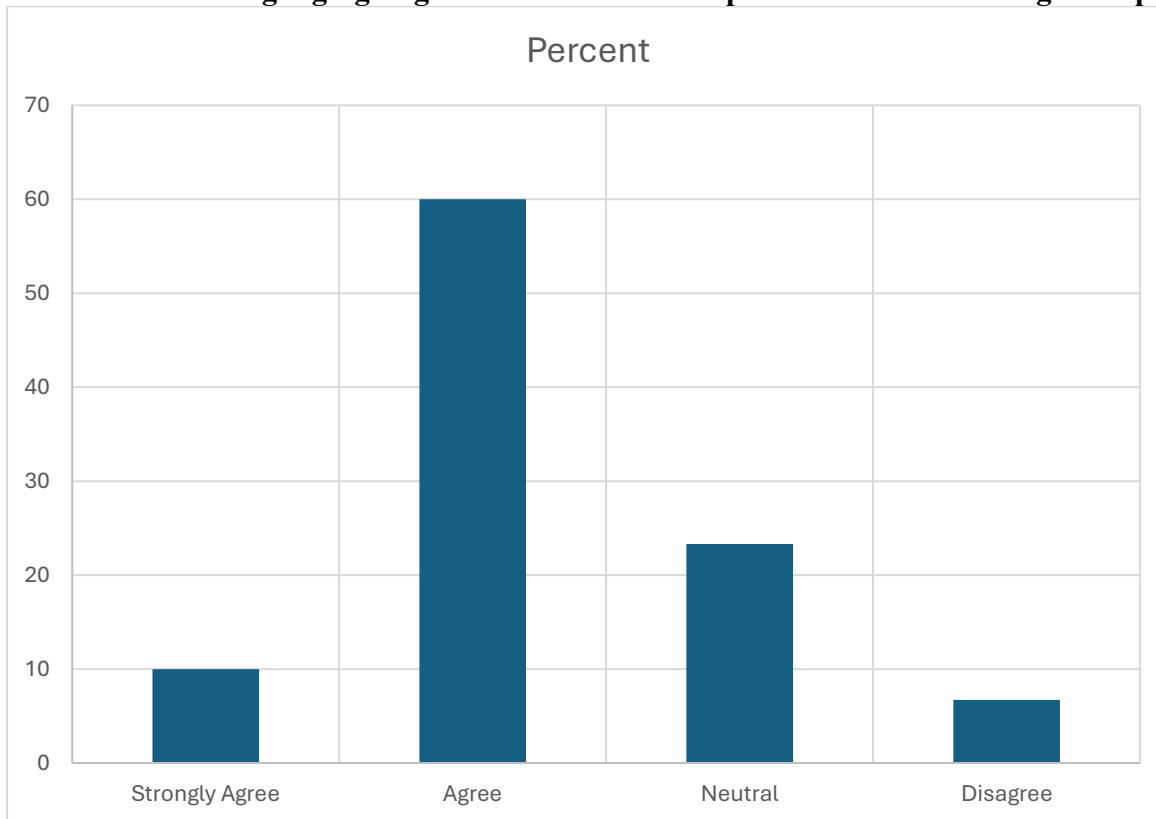
- 8. Mixing language during instruction may confuse students with weaker language foundations.**



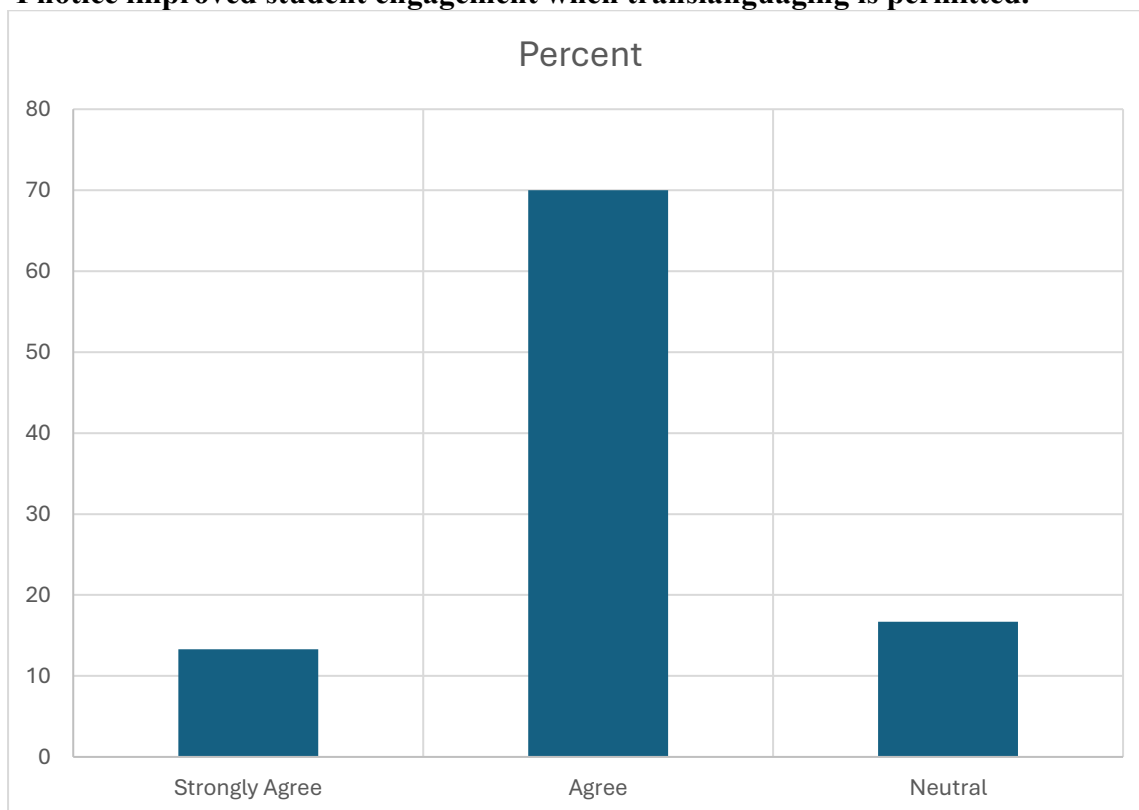
- 9. Translanguaging is not always appropriate for high-stakes or formal academic contexts.**



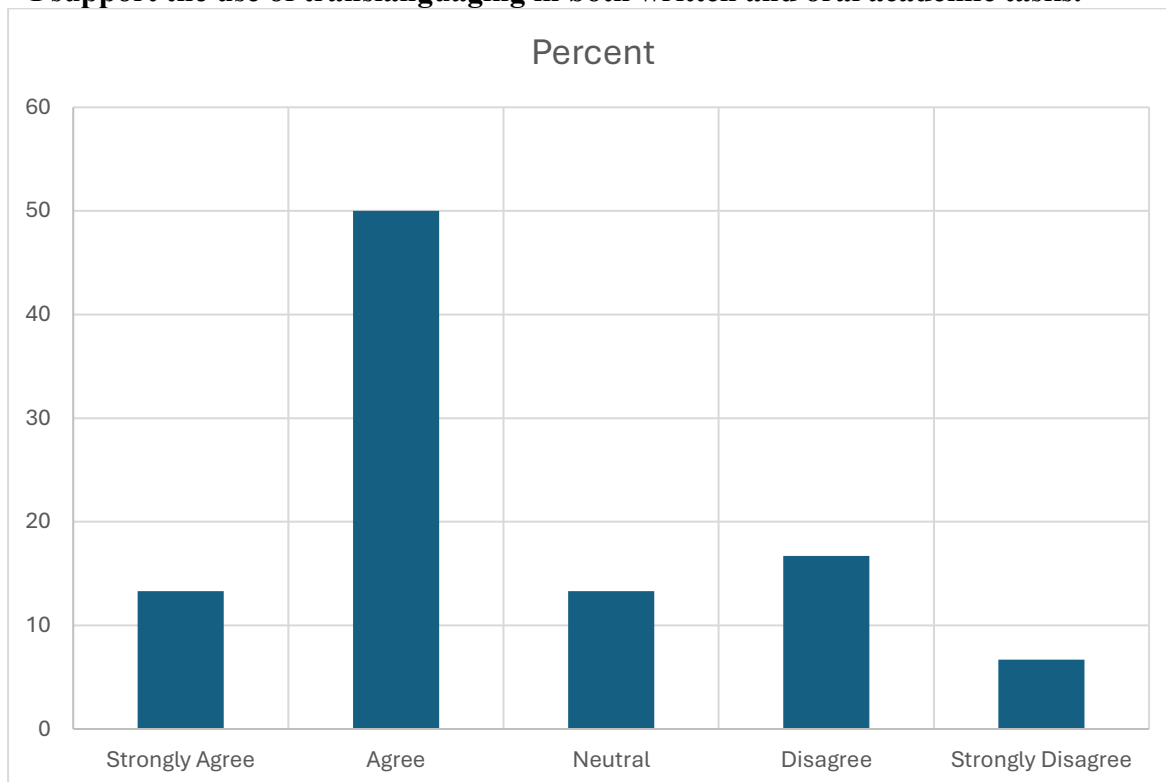
- 10. I believe translanguaging might reduce students' exposure to authentic English input.**



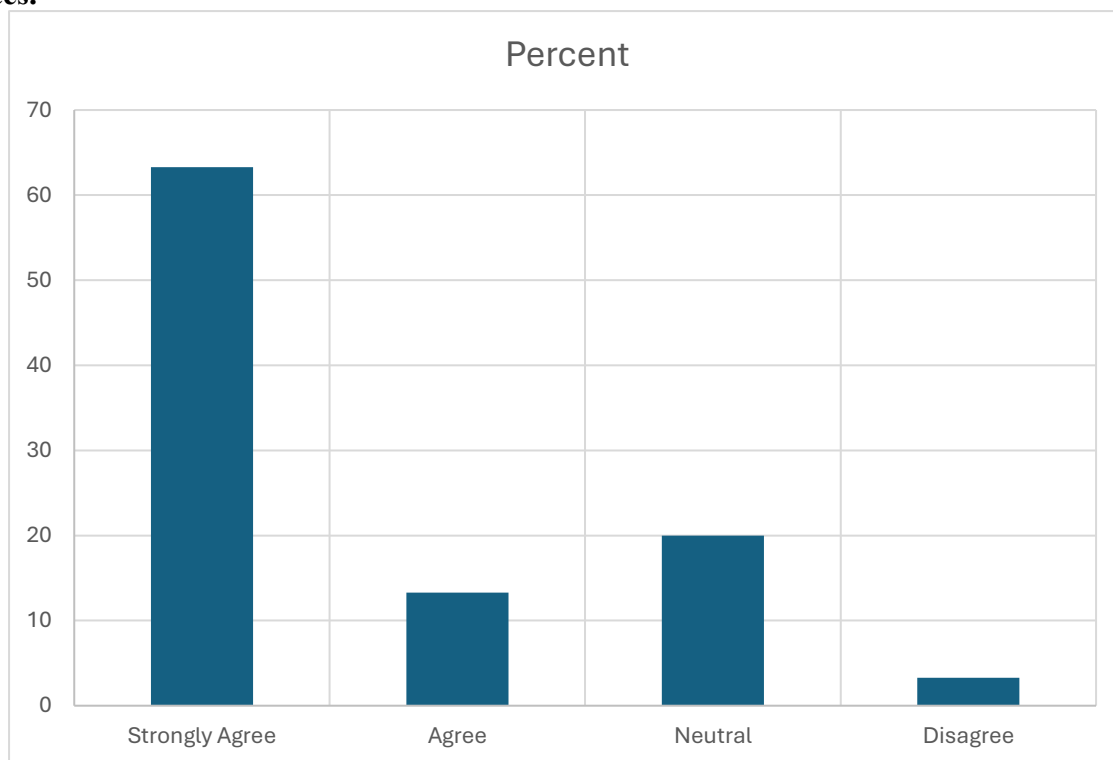
- 11. I notice improved student engagement when translanguaging is permitted.**



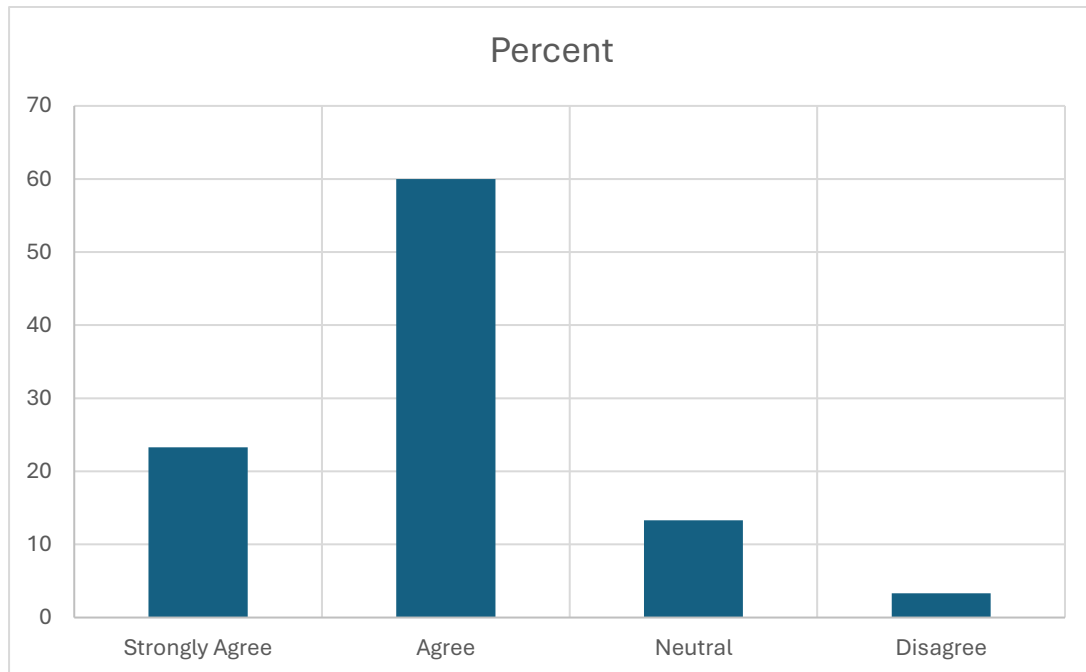
12. I support the use of translinguaging in both written and oral academic tasks.



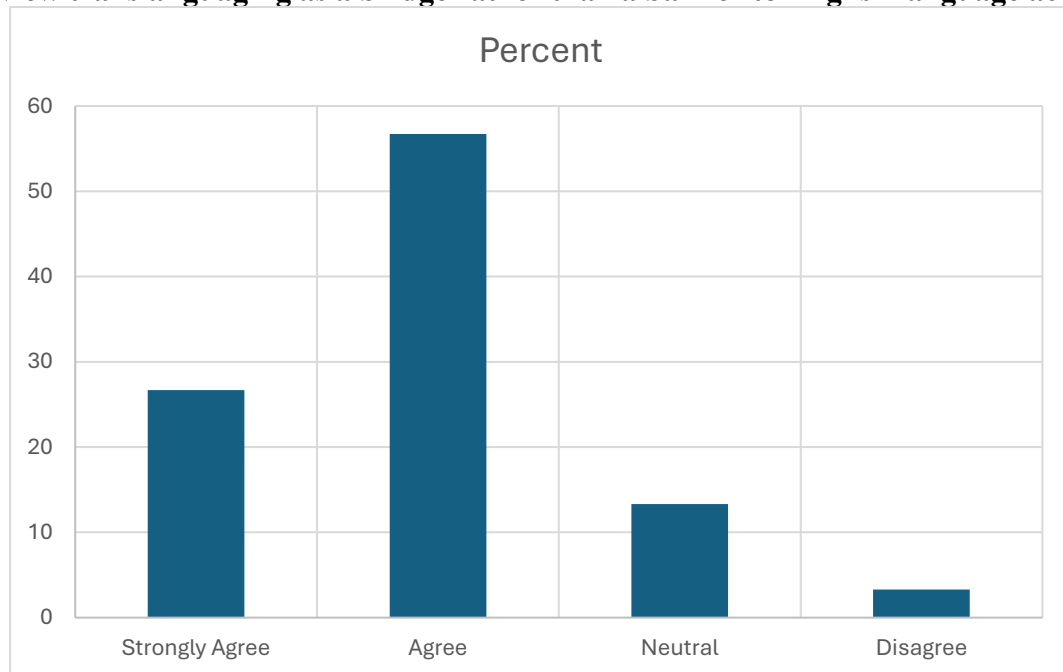
13. I believe teacher training should include strategies for effective translinguaging practices.



14. I assess students' English learning more fairly when their native language use is considered as a resource.



15. I view translanguageing as a bridge rather than a barrier to English language acquisition.



Results

The results indicate that overall, ESL teachers at the graduate level had a positive attitude towards translanguageing. Most of the respondents confirmed that translanguageing is a pedagogically effective strategy that helps learners to better understand the language they are learning, actively engage in class, explain complex concepts, and trust their own confidence with using the English language. The findings indicate that teachers are aware of the importance of accessing the learners' previous knowledge in the language domain to provide a meaningful learning experience. While some

participants were neutral or had reservations about some aspects of its implementation, the general trend of the responses suggests that there is a general positive attitude towards translanguaging in ESL classrooms. The findings are congruent with earlier studies, which have emphasised the value of translanguaging as a multilingual pedagogical approach that promotes inclusive and learner-centred pedagogies. Based on this, the study shows that translanguaging is considered as generally a positive instructional method which can aid in language learning and language teaching in graduate level educational contexts by ESL practitioners.

Recommendations

On the basis of the results of the study, it is recommended to include translanguaging in the pedagogical activities of ESL teachers to facilitate comprehension, encourage participation, and boost learners' confidence. Teachers should be aware that the learners bring to the classroom their linguistic resources as assets for academic engagement and knowledge building, instead of strictly following monolingual approaches to instruction. Professional learning and training for teachers should include professional development and training workshops at universities and educational institutions that develop the skills needed for the successful and intentional use of translanguaging. The choice of multilingual pedagogical practices could also be incorporated into curriculum development materials and teaching guidelines to address the needs of students who are multilingual. In addition, institutional policies need to recognise the pedagogical advantages of translanguaging and create favourable environment that support teachers in the use of multilingualism approaches when needed. The benefits of translanguaging are many, but the practice needs to be well planned to make sure enough exposure to English is provided for language development. Thus, translanguaging should be used as a supplementary aid and not alternative approach to teaching English. Future studies are encouraged to be conducted in larger scales with different educational settings and stakeholders, such as students and school leaders, to have a deeper understanding of translanguaging practices. Experimental and longitudinal research can also be conducted to investigate the long-term effects of translanguaging on language proficiency and academic success in ESL settings.

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