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**Artículo de investigación científica y tecnológica**

# Primary school pre-service teachers' views on CLIL and translanguaging for multilingual english teaching

# Percepciones de futuros maestros de primaria sobre AICLE y translingüismo en la enseñanza multilingüe del inglés

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## ABSTRACT

This research is the result of a qualitative case study aimed at describing the perceptions of fifty-seven pre-service teachers on the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging for the teaching of English in primary school. The guiding research question was: What are pre-service primary school teachers' perceptions on the integration of CLIL and translanguaging for the teaching of English in primary school? The participants were part of a primary education program where they learned to teach English using CLIL and translanguaging approaches. Data were collected through written and oral reflective logs and participants' artifacts, including lesson plans and other activities created by the pre-service teachers. The findings suggest that pre-service teachers perceive CLIL and translanguaging as approaches for enhancing their teaching competencies and language development, while also fostering multilingual learning environments. However, this study also identifies significant challenges, including difficulties in lesson planning, material design, and navigating the ideological constraints of the educational system. The findings contribute to deepen the understanding on how CLIL and translanguaging can be integrated into teaching education programs where it is necessary to constantly find areas for further support and development.

**Keywords:** Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); english teaching; multilingualism; pre-service teachers' education; translanguaging.

## RESUMEN

Esta investigación es el resultado de un estudio de caso cualitativo cuyo objetivo fue describir las percepciones de cincuenta y siete futuros docentes sobre la integración del Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE) y el translenguaje para la enseñanza del inglés en primaria. La pregunta guía de la investigación fue: ¿Cuáles son las percepciones de los futuros docentes de primaria sobre la integración del AICLE y el translenguaje para la enseñanza del inglés en primaria? Los participantes formaban parte de un programa de educación primaria donde aprendieron a enseñar inglés utilizando enfoques AICLE y translenguaje. Los datos se recopilaron a través de registros reflexivos escritos y orales y de los artefactos de los participantes, incluyendo planes de clase y otras actividades creadas por los futuros docentes. Los hallazgos sugieren que los futuros docentes perciben el AICLE y el translenguaje como enfoques para mejorar sus competencias docentes y el desarrollo lingüístico, a la vez que fomentan entornos de aprendizaje multilingües. Sin embargo, este estudio también identifica desafíos significativos, incluyendo dificultades en la planificación de clases, el diseño de materiales y la navegación de las limitaciones ideológicas del sistema educativo. Los hallazgos contribuyen a profundizar la comprensión sobre cómo CLIL y el translenguaje pueden integrarse en los programas de formación docente, donde es necesario encontrar constantemente áreas para un mayor apoyo y desarrollo.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua (AICLE); enseñanza del inglés; multilingüismo; docentes en formación; translingüismo.

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# INTRODUCTION

A significant number of teachers outside the English teaching area ponder about the most suitable approach to facilitate their lessons, using English as a medium of instruction, to meet their students' expectations and syllabus goals. In a country like Colombia, teachers must consider the potential of finding context-sensitive methodologies that align with students' interests and local needs (González, 2007). However, teachers usually encounter a great variety of ideas, resources, and recommendations to enhance their teaching; nevertheless, many of these approaches fail to address the challenges and realities they face such as cultural differences, limited resources, and inadequate teaching facilities (Lingam y Amp; Lingam, 2013).This disconnection highlights the need for context-sensitive methodologies that align with students' interests and local realities (González, 2007), particularly in foreign language teaching.

To meet the new demands such as globalization, Colombian language policy and the National Program of Bilingualism aim to introduce English proficiency among citizens for interacting with the global economy and cultural exchange (National Ministry of Education, 2006). This country-wide agenda, in addition to an international trend towards multilingual and inclusive teaching practices (Duarte y Günther-van, 2018; Candela Rodríguez, 2024), calls for innovative pedagogies. In this respect, learning English early in life can broaden one's perspective and enhance one's intellectual skills like logical thinking and imagination (Colombian Ministry of Education, 2006; Morrow, 2011, cited by Oktaviani y Fauzan, 2017). In achieving these goals, two approaches show significant promise; these are Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Translanguaging. CLIL integrates content and language learning; translanguaging helps students use of their linguistic repertoires, in different languages, to make learning more accessible and equitable.

Taking into account the reality of the classroom, the success and proper connection between these approaches rely on the teacher. Therefore, preparing pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement these approaches is essential (Prado Rebolledo *et al*., 2024). This is the core mission of the Didactics of the Foreign Language subject in the Early Childhood Education program at UNIMINUTO, Pereira, which introduces pre-service teachers to English language learning and methodologies through CLIL and Translanguaging.

This program provides instruction to these approaches in order to help pre-service teachers teach and learn, at a basic level, the English language. However, a specific gap exists in understanding how the future teachers themselves perceive them. Understanding future teachers' perceptions is crucial, as their beliefs and conceptions will shape their pedagogical choices and the quality of foreign language education in primary schools. Therefore, this research is intended to know their perceptions on the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging for their English learning process, and for the teaching of English in primary schools.

Informed by this perspective, this study explores pre-service teachers' perceptions on integrating CLIL and Translanguaging for teaching English in primary school. It aims to guide educators toward current, equitable pedagogies and raise awareness of the importance of early childhood English language teaching. Thus, the guiding research question was: ¿What are pre-service primary school teachers' perceptions on the integration of CLIL and translanguaging for the teaching of English in primary school?

## Literature review

Research studies developed at the international level report that translanguaging and CLIL improve multilingual education. Teachers' perceptions in Taiwan, Spain, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and other regions describe strategic first-language use, code-switching, and gestures as ways to enhance comprehension,

confidence, and student participation. In six studies on translanguaging (Yuvayapan, 2019; Fang y Liu, 2020; Serra y Feijóo, 2022; Kao, 2022; Li, 2024; Kuning y Haq, 2024), educators note benefits and concerns—specifically, that unchecked first-language use may hinder target language development under strict monolingual policies.

Regarding the studies related to CLIL, two studies (Mede y Çinar, 2018; Querol-Julián, 2024) explain that teachers' perceptions about the implementation of CLIL in the English class require detail planned, collaborative curriculum design and professional training; all these aspects lead to greater student motivation and language responsibility.

These eight international research studies consistently cite policy, ideology, and resource availability as factors that shape both teacher attitudes and classroom practices. Quantitative samples include up to 422 in-service teachers, while qualitative data document classroom discourse and interview insights.

In the Colombian context, research demonstrates that pre-service language teachers view translanguaging as a path to more inclusive pedagogical practice that embraces holistic views of bilingualism. For instance, Pastor (2025) found that a shift in the positions of the participants, in that they learned to value other visions of bilingualism, was at the core of building their classroom practice. Similarly, Jaramillo *et al.*, (2016) and Penagos and Cubillos (2023) found that teachers had positive attitudes towards the inclusion of translingual practices in CLIL classrooms. These studies demonstrated that implementing a dynamic bilingual education model combining CLIL and translanguaging benefited students and teachers in developing their mother tongue and the target language. Both studies concluded that teachers' perceptions regarding these two approaches helped them increase their professional development.

## Conceptual framework

This section aims at providing a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts that underpin the study. At the intersection of CLIL and translanguaging, this research delves into the reflections of primary education teaching program pre-service teachers as they engage in learning English and how to teach English following these two pedagogical approaches.

### Content and Language Integrating Learning

When defining (CLIL), Crystal (2003), Fajardo Dack *et al.,* (2020), McDougald and Pisarrello (2020) define it as an approach to language education that involves teaching subjects such as science, history, or mathematics through a foreign language or an additional language. The main goal of CLIL is to integrate the learning of both content and language, allowing students to develop their language proficiency while acquiring knowledge in other subject areas (Šulistová, 2013).

Manzano (2015) explains that teachers' perceptions regarding CLIL highlight the importance of finding strategies to teach students a new language. That is why this author mentions CLIL as an approach and an alternative to help students and teachers to respond to new social, cultural and professional demands that nowadays require more multicultural and multilingual skills. Related to the ideas of Manzano (2015), Mosquera Pérez (2022) conceptualizes CLIL as an attractive approach to students as it demands the use of online tools and Information and Communication, Technologies (ICT). However, the author clarifies that teachers perceive CLIL as a demanding approach since it requires them to apply a new pedagogy that includes innovative teaching strategies, actions and policies (Mosquera Pérez, 2022).

Unlike the perspectives of Manzano (2015) and Mosquera Pérez (2022), Reinoso-Montoya (2022) offers a

broader view of CLIL implementation from English language teachers' perceptions.The author states that teachers conceive CLIL is a dynamic, complex, and context-sensitive approach that integrates several methods, objectives and characteristics to ensure its successful implementation. Reinoso-Montoya discusses essential CLIL components, including motivation, community involvement, context, learning needs, and culture. This underscores the relevance of considering not only language and content but broader aspects like the ones aforementioned.

Regarding pre-service teachers, specifically in early childhood, who intend to teach English, CLIL is seen as an alternative to empower them to gain educational tools and strategies to impact their teaching practice (Azparren Legarre, 2022). Cruz-Arcila (2020) highlights that, in the case of Colombia, universities have started offering graduate and undergraduate program courses for supporting future teachers in the learning of content and language, specifically English. In this fashion, Banegas (2015) mentions that when training pre-service teachers in CLIL, it is essential to reflect upon other teachers' practices and beliefs to develop in pre-service teachers pedagogies that are responsive to local contexts for combining content and language instruction. Banegas (2015) points out that pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding CLIL underscore the need that CLIL frameworks must be designed around their prior experiences as learners and their envisioned teaching practices.

Alvira and González (2018) agree with the ideas of Banegas (2015) and Cruz-Arcila (2020) when they explain that English teachers express that one of the requirements for the implementation of CLIL is having a B1-B2 level of proficiency in the foreign language. Therefore, Alvira and Gonzalez suggest that at university level, education trainee programs should emphasize the development of, not only content knowledge subjects, but also linguistic and cultural courses that improve the foreign language competence in pre-service teachers.

**Translanguaging**

Mastering a foreign language has become crucial in a global world as the one we are all living. However, how can we teach English without threatening Colombian students' linguistic diversity? When we started exploring for more equitable language practices for children in Colombia, we found that translanguaging is seen as a possibility for teaching the English language without valuing a language more than the others. Translanguaging refers to the practice of using multiple languages fluidly and dynamically in the process of teaching and learning, acknowledging and valuing students' diverse linguistic resources (García y Lin, 2014; Christison *et al.*, 2021); something that is essential in a country like Colombia in which indigenous, afros and mestizos coexist in the same educational system (Duque-Salazar *et al*., 2024).

According to Ubaque-Casallas (2023), teachers' perceptions concerning the use of translanguaging in the class needs a different conception as languages have been taught separately. However, the separation of languages has forced many speakers to be labeled into native and non-native speakers signifying that non-native speakers, in most cases, have to delete any trace of their mother language to avoid stereotypes due to their accents or linguistic background. Ubaque-Casallas (2023) describes how English instruction and learning have raised barriers for English language learners. Therefore, in Ubaque-Casallas' (2023) study, educators consider translanguaging to be an approach that dismantles such barriers because it recognizes that language learning is a complex, interconnected process of blending numerous languages and an attitude toward being multilingual.

In this sense, Medina-Riveros and Austin (2022) mention that "translanguaging addresses the intentional use

of whole semiotic and cultural repertoires for learning and research" (p.287). This means that translanguaging involves the intentional integration of different languages, language varieties, and modes of communication by individuals or communities. Instead of strictly separating languages, translanguaging sees language as a holistic system that extends beyond traditional linguistic boundaries.

**Translanguaging pedagogy**

One of the goals of pedagogical translanguaging is the promotion of multilingualism in schools. Hence, it is essential for teachers to understand when and how to implement translanguaging strategies as part of their lesson planning. In this sense, teachers should plan ahead and be clear about when to use the first and additional languages. Baker and Wright (2017) highlight that teachers highlight the systematic planning of both language input and output to create opportunities to develop proficiency in both languages. To help teachers implement translanguaging effectively, practical strategies can be outlined, such as stance, design, and language shifts.

According to García *et al*. (2017), define the term "stance" as teachers' beliefs, which influence their decision to incorporate translanguaging at various moments. On the other hand, "design" encompasses the diverse activities assigned in the classroom, including instructional units and assessments. "Shifts" are unplanned occurrences that may arise in the classroom to amplify students' voices (Cenoz y Gorter, 2021). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers reflect on their own teaching practices and remain flexible in their planning, allowing translanguaging opportunities to enrich the language learning setting.

Gutiérrez and Aguirre-Ortega (2022) remark that teachers see translanguaging pedagogy as an opportunity to provide equitable access to content for English learners. It allows teachers to include more multilingual approaches in language education, scaffold content knowledge by connecting it to students' existing language competence, making it more accessible and relevant (Velásquez-Hoyos y Giraldo-Martínez,2024). Thus, the connection between CLIL and translanguaging could be essential for English language learners (Arias-Castaño, 2016).

Similarly, teachers' perceptions underscore that understanding pedagogical translanguaging goes beyond bilingual classrooms; it encompasses multiple languages, reflecting the linguistic diversity present in Colombia. This necessitates transforming and adapting classroom practices in collaboration with other subjects (Leiva Miranda *et al.,* 2024). Cenoz and Gorter (2021) point out that:

> If there are two or more languages in the school curriculum, they are used separately in different classes. It can be regarded as a weaker form of translanguaging because there are separate instructional spaces for each language. Integrated language curriculum implies that language subjects (spanish, english, french, etc.) are linked to one another because of similar methodological approaches and coordination among teachers (p.32).

It is evident that implementing these approaches in the Colombian teaching context presents challenges due to limited resources, varying language skills, and other location-specific issues. Accordingly, it is essential that teachers support diverse student voices and promote a richer learning experience.

**Multilingualism**

In response to phenomena like globalization, migration, and a growing cultural awareness, a new tendency

in worldwide English language education is a focus on multilingualism; this is also the case in Colombia. This shift emphasizes the importance of addressing language teaching from a multilingual perspective, recognizing the linguistic diversity of learners (Velásquez Hoyos y Villegas López, 2024). According to Miranda *et al*. (2024), multilingualism, for teachers immersed in language education, is conceived as a "multidimensional use of languages in societies with a critical view of language that analyzes racialized and colonized policies and practices involving historically-constructed unequal power relationships" (p.6). In other words, multilingualism is reconceptualizing English language education by highlighting the value of diverse linguistic backgrounds and promoting a more inclusive approach to language learning.

From the soft lens of society, multilingualism is defined as the occurrence and the practice of being able to speak several languages within a community. It implies not only the capability of people to overcome language barriers but also the social, cultural, educational, and economic impact of such diversity (UNESCO, 2024). Furthermore, multilingual settings can enhance the access opportunities and inclusion potential of different groups in social, political and economic life (Kroll y Dussias, 2017).

In the case of Colombia, multilingualism in English language education recognizes the diverse linguistic landscape of the country, encompassing Indigenous languages, regional dialects, Spanish, and English and the inclusion of different voices and perspectives in the curriculum. This approach values the linguistic repertoire of learners, integrating their prior language knowledge and experiences into English language instruction (Miranda *et al.,* 2023). However, when it comes to seeing the educational reality in Colombia, language policies continue to perpetuate educational models that do not favor multilingualism. These language policies "seem overwhelmingly obsessed with promoting English and Spanish, often neglecting and posing a threat to Colombia's linguistic diversity" (Duque-Salazar *et al.*, 2024, p.210).

Following previous ideas, when we talk about multilingualism, it is essential to explain that the inclusion of this term is associated with ideas towards the decolonization of English language teaching. In this sense, Velásquez-Hoyos and Giraldo Martínez (2024) explain that in the Global South, the main challenge is to "decolonize language practices and implement more multicultural educational processes that recognize the value of students' native languages and cultures and create an environment that fosters the development of both English language skills and their mother languages" (p.8).

**Teaching english in primary school**

We have seen the relevance of exposing children to learn different languages as it sets the foundation for their language development (Hashemi y Azizinezhad, 2011). According to Falah *et al.* (2023), Teachers' perceptions in relation to teaching English in primary school are seen as a process that needs to be underlined and highlighted by governments, policy makers and educators. These authors explain that it is necessary to consider interaction and socialization to help children "acquire and use information, like learning how to spell; to help children to acquire other physical skills, such as cutting, handwriting; and help children to acquire complex skills such as reading" (p.396).

Correa and González (2016) highlight that many teachers explain that teaching English in primary schools implies creativity, motivation and, of course, a good level of proficiency. In fact, the authors state that the latter is probably the most challenging aspect education in Colombia has. Correa and Gonzalez assert that teachers in Colombia recognize that there is a "lack of enough teachers prepared to teach English in primary schools. This is probably the most pressing and enduring challenge public primary schools have had to deal with since the issuing of the General Law of Education in 1994" (p.12). In fact, teaching English in

primary schools has faced difficulties. In Colombia, for instance, Correa and González (2016) mention that if universities direct their efforts to form teachers with a better linguistic profile in other languages, education in primary and even secondary schools would be more efficient. Additionally, authors such as Cruz-Arcila (2020) points out that language policies in Colombia have been designed thinking about the Colombian context; however, their implementation is deficient due to the lack of prepared English language teachers for primary education.

Therefore, teaching English in primary school requires a bilingual dynamic model that allows students and teachers to use their own linguistic repertoires to learn the new language; in doing so, CLIL and translanguaging constitute a possibility for learning English in early ages (Arias-Castaño, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

This research was framed under a qualitative research design, specifically as a case study. According to Simons (2012), a case study examines and explores a phenomenon, an individual, or a group of individuals in their natural environment. In our particular study, we took data from three groups of pre-service primary school teachers over three consecutive academic semesters. The focus was on their training for teaching English using CLIL and Translanguaging in the subject titled Didactics of the Foreign Language in Early Childhood Education: English. While being trained, they reflected upon their lesson planning and teaching practice.

### Participants and context

Fifty-seven female pre-service teachers whose ages ranged between 22 and 45 participated in this research in the second academic semester of 2022 and in the first and second semesters of the year 2023. They were enrolled in the subject of English Didactics of the Foreign Language from eighth semester in the BA program of Early Childhood Education at a private university in Colombia. This subject is 96 hours per semester, and it has a distance education modality with face-to- face sessions every Saturday. Additionally, the course has an autonomous and virtual component that implies reading, writing, planning classes and accessing the platform Moodle. The participants had an A2 English level. Different environments from urban (15) to rural (6) areas were impacted; namely, elementary schools with an indigenous, mestizos and afro-Colombian population. The following table illustrates the number of pre-service teachers and place of teaching practice.

**Table 1.** Number of pre-service teachers and place of teaching practice.

| Participants second semester 2022 | | Participants first semester 2023 | | Participants second semester 2023 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Place where they developed their teaching practice** | **Number of pre-service teachers.** | **Place where they developed their teaching practice** | **Number of pre-service teachers.** | **Place where they developed their teaching practice** | **Number of pre-service teachers.** |
| Centro de Desarrollo Infantil (CDI)[3] | 25 | Centro de Desarrollo Infantil (CDI) | 4 | Centro de Desarrollo Infantil (CDI) | 3 |
| Kindergarten | 3 | Kindergarten | 1 | Kindergarten | 2 |
| Primary school | 7 | Primary school | 7 | Primary school | 5 |
| Total of pre-service teachers second semester 2022 | 35 | Total of pre-service teachers first semester 2023 | 12 | Total of pre-service teachers second semester 2023 | 10 |

## Data collection instruments

This study used written and oral reflective logs as well as pre-service teachers' artifacts, for instance, lesson plans and class activities as data collection instruments. The former aimed to gather pre-service teachers' perceptions before and after the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging approaches, specifically at the end of each class and subject closure; pre-service teachers were asked to provide their insights and thoughts with some guiding questions: What was effective? What is necessary to be improved? How can you apply this knowledge in your teaching practice? What do you recommend? What challenges do you perceive? The latter was designed to align the plan of intervention considering aspects such as communicative competence, population, activities, length, evaluation, post-activity and comments through a semi-structured lesson plan.

Before conducting the study, the instruments were reviewed by two external university professors for content expert review in order to avoid any potential biases. Once we received feedback from these two professors, we piloted these instruments with a small group of pre-service teachers to refine them and make necessary adjustments.

## Ethical considerations

Additionally, to mitigate potential social desirability bias, we implemented different steps. We fostered a confidential and inclusive environment for participants in primary school classes, encouraging honest reflections and feedback. Additionally, we followed the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) that includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. We ensured credibility through data triangulation using participants' artifacts, oral and written reflective logs to gain a well-rounded understanding of participants' perspectives. For transferability, we provided detailed descriptions of the research setting and participants, allowing others to assess the relevance of our findings. We maintained dependability through thorough documentation of the research process. Finally, we

[3] Daycare.

reinforced confirmability by keeping an audit trail of key decisions, strengthening the trustworthiness of the study.

The Didactics of the Foreign Language in Early Childhood Education course is structured mainly in Spanish. Considering the profile of the university course professor, this seminar suffered a gradual change, and it started to be lectured in English (70%) and Spanish (30%). The idea with the use of English as a primary language of instruction was to model pre-service teachers how to implement translanguaging and CLIL: the participants read texts in English and planned their classes in English as well. They were instructed about the main components of both approaches; they reflected, planned, and reflected again to make changes in their teaching practice. Since this is a new subject in the program, this has served as a model for the teaching practice subject pre-service have to take in further semesters. Participants made videos of their implementation, and the teacher educator of the course observed them and provided feedback to each participant.

For ethical considerations, the participants of the project got informed at the beginning of each semester about the research's purpose, length, and activities they were going to carry out. Additionally, they completed a Google Form giving their informed consent to participate in this study (see appendix 1).

**Data analysis**

For analyzing the reflections and perceptions of pre-service primary school teachers, we used grounded theory which according to De la Espriella and Gómez Restrepo (2020), Grounded Theory is about creation of theories based on data. In this sense, the researchers need to be systematic to better organize and analyze the data collected. For this study, we initiated the data analysis by employing open coding. This involved a thorough analysis of participants' reflections and lesson planning, dissecting them into significant segments, and assigning initial codes. Furthermore, we used axial coding to identify connections between these codes, ultimately resulting in the formulation of categories and subcategories. We assigned different colors to each category. Lastly, we implemented selective coding to incorporate these concepts into a framework, aiming to construct a comprehensive theory that captures the main aspects of the patterns and themes present in the data. Figure 1 and table 2 describe the data analysis process.

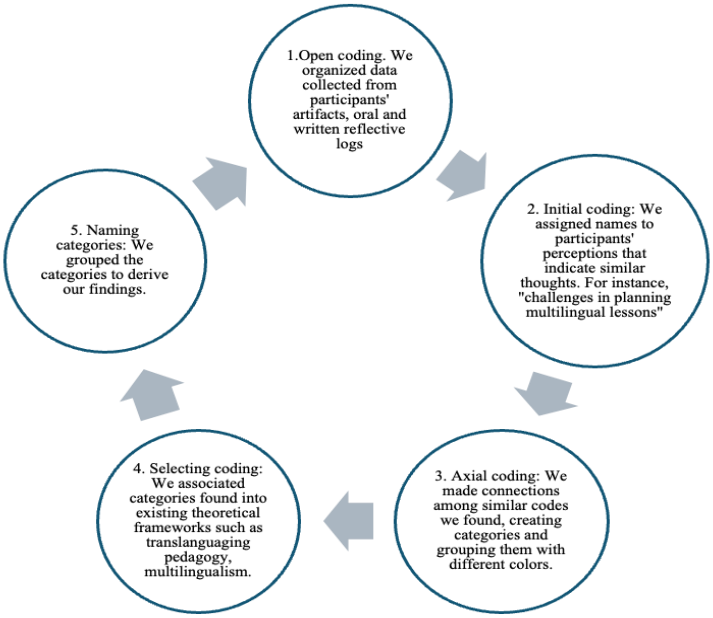


**Figure 1.** Data analysis.

**Table 2.** Synthesis of categories and codes.

| Color used to codify | Categories | Initial codes |
|---|---|---|
| Green | The impact of CLIL and Translanguaging on the language and teaching skills of pre-service teachers. | - Developing language skills.<br>- Learning English through content of other subject areas.<br>- Designing effective lesson plans.<br>- Creating relevant teaching materials. |
| Yellow | The role of CLIL and Translanguaging as multilingual approaches for empowering primary students' linguistic repertoire and diversity. | - Recognizing the linguistic diversity.<br>- Implementing multilingual strategies.<br>- Using Spanish, English and indigenous languages.<br>- Using different languages in the class for different purposes. |
| Blue | The challenge of implementing CLIL and Translanguaging for primary school pre-service teachers. | - Addressing limited infrastructure, such as internet and electricity.<br>- Overcoming teacher resistance to translanguaging.<br>- Managing a preference for an English-only environment.<br>- Navigating time-consuming planning and design tasks. |

## Findings

After data triangulation, three main themes emerged from pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding the teaching of English in primary schools using CLIL and translanguaging approaches. These are: CLIL and translanguaging approaches increase pre-service teachers' language and teaching skills, CLIL and translanguaging as multilingual approaches to empower students' linguistic repertoire and diversity, and CLIL and translanguaging as a challenge for primary school pre-service teachers.

### The impact of CLIL and translanguaging on the language and teaching skills of pre-service teachers

Pre-service teachers' perceptions reported improvements in their language and teaching skills. Their perceptions reported that they gained language proficiency thanks to the CLIL approach along with the activities and lesson planning that permitted them to interact with the English language at all levels. One of the main goals of CLIL is to integrate the learning of content and language, allowing pre-service teachers to improve their English language development while learning knowledge in other subject areas. As a result, it could be observed that pre-service teachers activated their background knowledge from other subjects to accomplish their goals at the time of meeting students' needs and the role of teaching.

Pre-service teachers reported substantial improvements in their English language proficiency through the CLIL approach, particularly through structured activities and lesson planning that required interaction with English at all linguistic levels. For instance, one participant noted:

> "It is important to mention that the educator's role must be trained [educators must be trained] to acquire methodological, communicative, linguistic, discursive, strategic, and pedagogical skills, among others, allowing preparation to provide the best teaching processes while integrating knowledge from other areas when teaching English." (Participant 16, 2022 written reflective log).

This evidence shows how CLIL encourages pre-service teachers to develop different skills that enable them to deliver more effective and contextually relevant language classes. Additionally, the translanguaging approach facilitated the strategic use of Spanish, students' mother tongue (L1), and English (L2) to scaffold understanding and reinforce language patterns as evident in the following excerpt:

> "Thanks to the instructions and clarifications using English and Spanish, I was able to understand some topics and grammar issues." (Participant 22, first semester 2022, written reflective log).

Another element found was that the pedagogical practices embedded in the CLIL and translanguaging approaches provided pre-service teachers with opportunities to align their teaching methodologies with national educational policies such as the ones proposed by the Colombian Ministry of Education. Participants emphasized how these practices enabled them to integrate current methodologies and student-centered activities into their teaching. For example:

> "From the experiences in the pedagogical practices, I learned current methodologies and activities that promote the acquisition of English, taking into account what is required by the National Ministry of Education, as well as the interests and needs of the students." (Participant 7, 2023, oral reflective log).

Moreover, the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging promoted more reflective practices among pre-service teachers. The combination of these approaches encouraged them to critically assess their teaching beliefs and adapt their methodologies to better meet the needs of their students. For instance, one participant shared:

> "Being part of this subject has allowed me to re-think the actions and plans that I am going to use in my classroom. I know I am not an expert, but I can do something so they get more interest in learning English." (Participant 2, second semester 2022, written reflective log).

This shift toward reflective and context-responsive pedagogy underscores the transformative potential of CLIL and translanguaging in shaping pre-service teachers' professional identities and practices.

Additionally, the pedagogical practices opened opportunities for language growth while gaining knowledge about the policies that rule the teaching and learning of English in the Colombian context; thus, benefiting their future planning and the improvement of English teaching processes in early childhood.

> "I know I must work on my level of English to guide an effective teaching process. Thanks to the pedagogical practices, I have improved a lot, but there is still room for improvement." (Participant 5, 2023, oral reflective log).

**The role of CLIL and translanguaging as multilingual approaches for empowering primary students' linguistic repertoire and diversity**

This finding describes pre-service teachers' perceptions on how (CLIL) and translanguaging have emerged as prominent approaches that offer unique perspectives on language learning by fostering multilingualism

among language students; particularly, primary school students. This is evident in the following excerpt taken from participant 5 in the first semester of 2023.

> What we have learnt in this course and in our implementation has allowed me to see the potential that CLIL and Translanguaging have in teaching English in primary school. I feel that with translanguaging, students gradually learn the English language as something that is not imposed. They freely express themselves and connect what they knew in their first language to the new one. It is also beneficial to students to connect as well with the things they are learning in other subject matters. (Participant 5, oral reflective log).

This excerpt indicates that when implementing translanguaging and CLIL in primary education, students are not merely exposed to a monoglossic environment, instead, different languages coexist to gradually learn another language enriching students' linguistic repertoire as seen in the excerpt below:

> CLIL and translanguaging are dynamic approaches that motivate children to learn the language from the very beginning of their learning process. In my teaching practice, I noticed how my students started to speak in English with words they knew in their mother language. Sometimes, of course, they used their first language to provide complex explanations (Participant 3, second semester 2022, written reflective log).

Participant 3 emphasizes the active and engaging nature of CLIL and translanguaging in motivating children to learn a new language early on. It also highlights the natural process of code-switching and language transfer, showcasing how students integrate their first language into their English expressions. Additionally, the use of the first language is seen as a valuable resource, enabling students to provide complex explanations in their language learning journey.

Pre-service teachers' perceptions also allude that these approaches require the implementation of multilingual teaching strategies to fulfill students' needs and not threaten their linguistic diversity. This is evident in the following information taken from pre-service teachers' lesson plan in the year 2022.

> The implementation of appropriate multilingual strategies to compensate for the gaps that may occur in communication as this is needed to teach and learn (Participant 4, 2022, Artifact: lesson plan).

Colombia is a multilingual and multicultural country; therefore, strategies that promote the learning of foreign languages under a multilingual approach become essential in the language class. Hence, the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging could be seen as approaches that facilitate such a purpose. Participant 7 explains that:

> We as pre-service teachers need to know the potential that CLIL and translanguaging have in our educational system. We cannot continue perpetuating the same copy models that come from Europe or the USA. We need to have our own methods and materials that better suit the needs of our Colombian students. I think that CLIL and translanguaging are good approaches to make adaptations to our context and continue preserving our roots (Participant, the second semester 2023, artifact: class activity).

This pre-service teacher points out that CLIL and translanguaging are valuable approaches that can be adapted to the Colombian context considering content-sensible approaches and materials that are more

aligned with the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students. Through these approaches, this pre-service teacher explains that it is possible to make educational adaptations that not only meet the needs of the students, but also help preserve and celebrate the cultural roots of the Colombian community.

Additionally, pre-service teachers mentioned that CLIL and translanguaging permits teachers and students to learn the English language from a contextualized perspective as seen in the following excerpts:

> English in primary school has been taught under traditional models: isolated vocabulary, transcriptions of texts. In fact, there are areas of Colombia in which primary school students do not even receive English teaching instruction. However, if Licenciaturas [Teaching programs] in primary education include CLIL and translanguaging in their curriculums, we as primary school teachers to be will have more opportunities to teach English in a better way, adapt ourselves to the linguistic needs of the students, and boost multilingualism in Colombia. (Participant 8, second semester 2023, reflective log).

> I think we need to move on from those methodologies in which students' mother tongue is prohibited in the class. This does not allow students to use all their linguistic resources at their disposal. We need approaches like CLIL and translanguaging that are more open to helping students learn other languages without banning them from speaking their first language. (Participant 3, first semester 2023, reflective log).

By analyzing these excerpts, it is possible to say that pre-service teachers' perceptions claim that CLIL and translanguaging acknowledges and utilizes students' linguistic diversity. These approaches can enhance students' engagement, motivation, and overall language development. Hence, these perceptions are in accordance with the need to train university undergraduate teaching programs to better the profile and, of course, quality of education in primary school.

**The challenge of implementing CLIL and translanguaging for primary school pre-service teachers**

Even though pre-service teachers perceive the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging as an opportunity to transform the teaching of English in primary education, they also recognize the application of these approaches as a formidable challenge. The challenges encountered by pre-service teachers while implementing CLIL and translanguaging were related to pedagogical and planning demands, tensions with established monolingual conceptions, and contextual and infrastructural difficulties.

To begin with, participants' perceptions demonstrate that lesson planning was a big challenge at the beginning of their teaching practice as indicated below:

> I think that CLIL and translanguaging have great potential to be implemented, but planning using these approaches is not easy. I have to look for material, activities that work well for my students' interest and age. I was teaching in a CDI and my students were between 4 and 5 years old. I loved using translanguaging because I felt that my students understood the instructions better, but CLIL was a little bit demanding for me and for my students (Participant 4, second semester 2023, written reflective log).

> When I started planning my classes, I was aware that I needed to plan playful activities because I had first grade. At some point in my lesson planning, I did not know what else to include because I felt that I had included all in previous classes (Participant 7, second semester 2023, written reflective

log).

Previous excerpts demonstrate that pre-service teachers saw lesson planning based on CLIL and translanguaging as a demanding task. It needed to bring out their creativity as they were working with little kids. Aligned with this challenge, pre-service teachers found material design as another hardship. The following excerpts illustrate this.

> I was in charge of third grade and the teaching of natural sciences in English. In my classes, I tried to have printed materials and real experiments to catch my students' attention. In every class, I needed to print, cut, paste, and even create scale projects which took me so much time, but it definitely paid off. My conclusion is that an effective implementation of these approaches [CLIL and translanguaging] require effective material design skills that I hop to master in the future (Participant 1, first semester 2023, oral reflective log).

> Material design was a big challenge for me. Every time I had my teaching practice, I stayed up late to organize my material, practice the content I was going to teach, and design some worksheets and even create stories or songs (Participant 15, year 2022, written reflective log).

Apart from material design and lesson planning, pre-service teachers reported challenges in the educational system itself and tensions with established monolingual conceptions some in-service teachers had. For example, participant 20 stated that:

> In one of my classes I was teaching the rotation movement of the earth. I used English to explain vocabulary, content and pronunciation. I used Spanish to give instructions and control discipline; I stipulated that in my lesson plan. However, the in-service teacher always criticized my teaching practice. She told me that I needed to use English all the time, that I couldn't use Spanish in the English class (Participant 20, year 2022, written reflective log).

From this excerpt, it is noticeable that the in-service teacher had a monoglossic conception of the teaching of languages, highlighting tensions between modern approaches and established practices. In fact, she saw students' mother language as a threat and not as a source to enrich students' linguistic repertoire. Even though the pre-service teacher used a pre-planned bilingual strategy as it is suggested when applying translanguaging, the in-service teacher's perception suggests that English should be exclusively used throughout the lesson, without any allowance for the use of Spanish. The different teaching philosophies and language-use preferences between the two instructors highlights the complexities and differing perspectives within language education.

Moreover, the subsequent information gives an account of other educational system and infrastructure conundrums.

> I developed my teaching practice in Pueblo Rico, Risaralda. This town is recognized for its linguistic diversity. When I started my practice, I realized that I had some indigenous students that did not speak Spanish very well, so it was a big challenge teaching English to them. So, we as pre-service teachers need more guidance on what to do in these situations (participant 10, year 2022, oral reflective log).

> In my university classes, I learnt that it is good to implement CLIL and translanguaging using technological tools. However, I developed my practice in a rural school. I realized that in my school

> there was electricity, but there were no electric outlets to plug the video beam or the computer. That is why I understood why in-service teachers continue using traditional teaching methods since these are the easiest to implement in rural zones (participant 8, second semester 2023, written reflective log).

Both excerpts exemplify the difficulties pre-service teachers faced. The first one implies a challenge that has to do with the context and linguistic background of the students. This suggests that Colombia may need to move beyond a national bilingual program and consider a multilingual approach to language teaching, as seen in successful practices in other countries. Such an approach would better address the linguistic diversity of students and align with global trends in language education. The second portrays the educational imbalances that are present in Colombian rural schools such as the lack of infrastructure, that of course affects the quality of education in such a context. This reality reflects broader systemic issues that need to be addressed, especially in rural regions, to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students.

## DISCUSSION

After analyzing the main results of this study, it is pertinent to state that pre-service teachers perceived CLIL and translanguaging as valuable tools for enhancing their language and teaching skills. Specifically, participants reported improvements in their English language competence through CLIL, aligning with the core principles of CLIL (Šulistová, 2013). Moreover, they recognized the pedagogical benefits of these approaches, noting enhanced abilities in lesson planning and the implementation of engaging, context-sensitive activities. These insights are consistent with previous research highlighting the potential of CLIL to empower pre-service teachers by providing them with practical educational tools and strategies (Azparren Legarre, 2022).

Another significant finding was the recognition of CLIL and translanguaging as multilingual approaches that empower students' linguistic repertoires and embrace diversity. Pre-service teachers acknowledged the importance of valuing students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, including the use of their mother tongue alongside English. This connects with the principles of translanguaging, which advocates for the fluid and dynamic use of multiple languages in the classroom (García y Lin, 2014; Christison *et al.*, 2021). Participants observed that integrating students' existing language competencies made content knowledge more accessible and relevant, reinforcing the idea that translanguaging can provide equitable access to learning (Gutiérrez y Aguirre-Ortega, 2022). This awareness reflects a shift towards more inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices, recognizing the linguistic diversity inherent in the Colombian educational context.

Despite the perceived benefits, the study also highlighted several challenges associated with implementing CLIL and translanguaging. Pre-service teachers reported difficulties in lesson planning, particularly in designing activities that effectively integrated content and language objectives. They also expressed concerns about material design and the need for more resources to support these innovative approaches.

Furthermore, some participants noted challenges related to the prevailing ideologies within the school system, which often favored traditional, monolingual teaching practices (Duque Salazar *et al.*, 2024). These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive teacher training and ongoing professional development to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement CLIL and translanguaging. The results also highlight a critical need to foster dialogue and professional development

among in-service teachers to bridge the ideological gap and align mentoring practices with contemporary, research-supported multilingual approaches. Ultimately, for CLIL and translanguaging to flourish, systemic support is required. This includes developing clear institutional policies that endorse pedagogical translanguaging, investing in basic infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and re-evaluating national bilingual policies to be more inclusive of Colombia's vast linguistic diversity, thus ensuring that innovative pedagogies can be adapted equitably across all contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Our purpose with this qualitative case study was to describe the perceptions and reflections of 57 pre-service teachers enrolled in a primary education teaching program in Colombia as they engage in teaching English through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging practices. Data from reflective logs and students' artifacts suggest that these teaching approaches contribute to a richer and more dynamic language learning environment.

The findings of this case study emphasize the significance of implementing CLIL and translanguaging in the teaching practices of pre-service teachers of a primary education teaching program. a rise in their awareness related to the benefits of integrating content and language instruction, fostering a more holistic and immersive learning experience for primary education students. Moreover, participants' perceptions indicated that the integration of CLIL and translanguaging advocates for a more inclusive and flexible approach to language instruction which recognizes the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the students, favoring a more multilingual approach to teaching languages in primary education in Colombia.

Additionally, the study's findings describe the challenges encountered by participants in the implementation of CLIL and translanguaging approaches. An essential hurdle is grounded in the prevailing perceptions of language teaching held by primary school educators, which negatively impact the effective application of these approaches in the language class. The rejection of in-service teachers to fully accept translanguaging portrays a failed opportunity for promoting a more inclusive and multilingual perspective in the teaching of English in Colombia. Particularly, one pre-service teacher's experience with indigenous students, who were struggling to understand Spanish, highlights a critical gap in teacher preparation for the linguistic diversity. Hence, this study advocates for a paradigm shift in language education in Colombia, urging a transition towards a more multilingual approach to better address the diverse linguistic needs of students since primary school education.

Regarding the contribution of the study, it is paramount to say that through the implementation of these approaches, we aim to shed light on how primary school pre-service teachers can contribute to a more inclusive and robust language learning environment for young learners. Furthermore, the insights gained from this research contribute to the ongoing dialogue on effective language teaching methodologies which emphasizes the need for a multilingual and comprehensive and contextually sensitive approach to language education. As educators strive to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of today's globalized world, the findings of this study highlight the importance of equipping pre-service teachers with innovative and inclusive strategies that, in the long run, strengthens primary education and university teaching programs in Colombia.

Further studies should focus on the implementation of these approaches in primary education and pre-service teachers' teaching practices to see the impact on young learners and multilingual education in Colombia. In short, the dynamic landscape of 21st-century education requires teaching practices that adopt

the multilingual and culturally diverse backgrounds of students and ask pre-service and in-service teachers prepared to face these challenges.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The authors declare that during the execution of the work or the writing of the article, no personal or unintentional interests, including misconduct or values other than those usually and ethically held by this research, have influenced the work.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Jesús Andrés López Henao, the lead author, conducted the research for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program (introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, results, and analysis) and prepared the final version of the document.

Ángela Patricia Velásquez Hoyos, as co-author, contributed to the writing, review, and adjustments (Introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, results, and analysis), and reviewed the final document.

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