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วารสารอิเล็กทรอนิกส์
ทางการศึกษา

การพัฒนาความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีจีน
โดยการใช้การเชื่อมโอนภาษาในการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ

Improving English Reading Comprehension of Chinese Undergraduates
through the Use of Translanguaging in English Reading Instruction

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาผลกระทบของการเชื่อมโอนภาษาในการพัฒนาความเข้าใจการอ่าน
ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีจีน และ 2) สำรวจความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีจีนต่อการใช้การเชื่อมโอนภาษา
ในการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ ตัวอย่างของงานวิจัย คือ นักศึกษาจำนวน 42 คน ที่ไม่ได้มาจากวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษจาก
มหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งทางตะวันตกเฉียงใต้ของประเทศจีน ซึ่งคัดเลือกโดยการสุ่มแบบเจาะจง เนื่องจากนักศึกษาทั้งหมด
ลงทะเบียนเรียนในหลักสูตรการอ่านและการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของมหาวิทยาลัยเดียวกันที่สอนโดยผู้วิจัย โดยจัดการเรียน
การสอนใช้ระยะเวลา 9 สัปดาห์ และดำเนินการภายใต้กรอบการทำงาน Preview-View-Review (PVR) ในการสอนอ่าน
ภาษาอังกฤษ เครื่องมือการสอนประกอบด้วยแผนการสอน ส่วนเครื่องมือการวิจัยประกอบด้วยการทดสอบก่อนและหลังเกี่ยวกับ
ความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ และการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) นักศึกษาได้รับคะแนนสูงขึ้น
ในการทดสอบความเข้าใจการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษหลังจากใช้การเชื่อมโอนภาษาในการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ และ 2) นักศึกษา
มีทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อการใช้การเชื่อมโอนภาษาในการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ โดยเฉพาะในการช่วยเพิ่มความเข้าใจและ
ประสิทธิภาพในการเรียนรู้ ลดแรงกดดันในการเรียนรู้ และเพิ่มความสนใจในการเรียนรู้ ผลการวิจัยนี้เน้นย้ำถึงศักยภาพ
ทางการสอนในการนำการเชื่อมโอนภาษาเข้ามาใช้ในการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ และเสนอแนะให้มีการศึกษาวิจัยเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับ
การประยุกต์ใช้แนวทางนี้ในบริบทการศึกษาที่หลากหลายมากยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ : การเชื่อมโอนภาษา, ความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ, นักศึกษาปริญญาตรีจีน, การสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to: 1) investigate the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates, and 2) explore the opinions of Chinese undergraduates towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction. The participants were 42 non-English major undergraduates from a provincial university in southwest China, selected through purposive sampling, as they were all enrolled in the same College English Reading and Writing course taught by the researcher. The instruction lasted for nine weeks and was implemented within the Preview-View-Review (PVR) framework in English reading instruction. The instructional instrument included lesson plans, while the research instruments included pre- and post-tests of English reading comprehension, and semi-structured interviews. The research results indicated that 1) the students achieved substantially higher scores on the English reading comprehension test following the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction, and 2) the students had a positive attitude towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction, particularly in enhancing understanding and learning efficiency, reducing learning pressure, and increasing learning interest. These findings highlight the pedagogical potential of incorporating translanguaging in English reading instruction. Further research is recommended on its application in different educational contexts.

Keywords: translanguaging, English reading comprehension, Chinese undergraduates, English reading instruction

Introduction

Reading has long been prioritized in English language instruction (Bakken & Lund, 2018) and it also accounts for the largest proportion of the various types of English exams and English proficiency tests. However, Chinese undergraduates commonly face difficulties in English reading due to vocabulary and grammar barriers, poor reading habits, and a lack of background knowledge about Western culture (Cui & Li, 2013). These problems illustrate the pressing need for improvement in reading instruction to enhance undergraduates' reading ability in College English teaching in China.

Despite ongoing efforts to improve students' English proficiency, the current language policy and classroom discourse practices in China's higher education system remain native-language oriented (Fang & Baker, 2018). However, many Chinese universities implement strict English-only policies in EFL classrooms (Fang, 2018). While these policies aim to create an immersive learning environment, they also pose significant challenges for students with limited English proficiency and may increase learning anxiety. Compared to the boredom of Chinese-only

classes and the difficulty of English-only classes, the emergence of translanguaging, a useful pedagogical strategy, not only provides teachers with innovative opportunities (Zhou, 2021) but also offers a wider range of possibilities for improving undergraduates' English proficiency.

Translanguaging encourages learners to use their entire language knowledge in learning, regardless of the amount of explicit structural knowledge they possess of various specific languages (Wei, 2022). Research suggests that translanguaging creates a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, enhances comprehension, increases confidence in reading English, and reduces learning stress and anxiety (Alasmari et al., 2022; García, 2009; Vaish & Subhan, 2015; Zhang & Jocuns, 2022). While some studies have examined students' attitudes towards translanguaging, findings remain mixed. For example, students at a university in southeastern China held a neutral-to-positive stance towards translanguaging (Fang & Liu, 2020). However, Kwihangana (2021) noted that a group of Kinyarwanda-speaking students viewed translanguaging as the opposite of English-only classrooms, thereby jeopardizing their English mastery. These contrasting findings highlight the need for further exploration of translanguaging across educational and cultural contexts.

Unlike code-switching, which refers to the alternation between two separate language systems within a discourse, often without changing the interlocutor or topic (Poplack, 2001; García & Lin, 2017), translanguaging is more than switching between languages. It integrates multiple communicative modes, such as reading, writing, and discussion, to support deeper learning and engagement. This structured approach ensures that both languages are used as resources for learning, which is particularly relevant for Chinese undergraduates who face persistent challenges in English reading comprehension.

Considering the English teaching environment in Chinese universities, the use of translanguaging in EFL classes in China seems to be an attractive option. Though widely studied in multilingual contexts (e.g., Singapore: Vaish & Subhan, 2015; U.S.: García, 2009), translanguaging remains underexplored in Chinese EFL reading classes. Previous studies have primarily focused on oral participation or general classroom interaction, rather than on reading comprehension outcomes. Furthermore, few studies have explored how translanguaging can be effectively implemented in universities located in less-resourced regions, such as provincial universities. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this research gap by implementing translanguaging in English reading instruction for non-English major undergraduates to determine its effects on their English

reading comprehension. It also aims to contribute to the broader discussion on how to effectively integrate translanguaging into English reading instruction within the constraints of China's existing language policy.

Objectives

1. To investigate the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates.

2. To explore the opinions of Chinese undergraduates towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction.

Research Framework

Translanguaging refers to a pedagogical practice in which both teachers and students strategically use a stronger language to learn or develop proficiency in a weaker language (Lewis et al., 2012), thereby enhancing proficiency in both languages. Unlike monolingual instruction, translanguaging creates a more inclusive environment where students flexibly use L1 and L2 to achieve deeper text comprehension.

The Preview-View-Review (PVR) is a specific pedagogical framework designed for emergent bilingual classroom environments (Mercuri, 2015). It provides a structured approach that aligns well with translanguaging. In the Preview stage, translanguaging activates background knowledge by incorporating students' L1 to introduce key concepts. During View, it scaffolds comprehension and facilitates mastery of detailed information by allowing strategic L1-L2 interaction. In Review, students use both languages to consolidate learning, discuss key ideas, and refine understanding (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Hesson et al., 2014). While PVR has been primarily applied in K-12 classrooms, García (2009) argues that it facilitates explicit teaching of specialized vocabulary, which is important for content understanding, especially in secondary and higher education.

Compared with other pedagogical models such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the PVR framework places more emphasis on guided comprehension, structured reflection, and knowledge construction—elements that are particularly important in reading instruction. This feature makes PVR a theoretically and pedagogically appropriate framework for this study.

This study employed translanguaging within the PVR instructional framework in English reading instruction to investigate its effects on Chinese undergraduates' English reading comprehension. The three levels of reading comprehension proposed by Herber (1978), which include literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension, were used to assess the students' English reading comprehension. Due to the students' limited English proficiency and background knowledge, the study focuses on literal and inferential comprehension, as these levels reflect their ability to extract explicit information and make connections within texts. (Figure 1)

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework of the Study
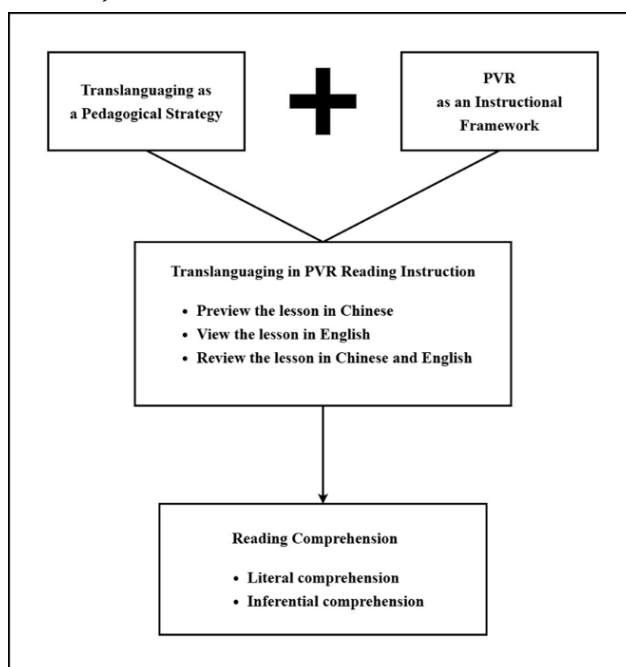
Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach that adopted a one-group quasi-experimental design using quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates. The quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were used to compare the results of the students' English reading comprehension, whereas the qualitative data from the student

interviews were used to explore the opinions of Chinese undergraduates towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction.

The teaching process followed the PVR instructional framework, integrating translanguaging in the three stages. The specific steps of the teaching process are as follows.

Preview: Key concepts were introduced in Chinese, allowing students to brainstorm in Chinese before attempting English expressions. To facilitate understanding, bilingual texts were provided, enabling students to compare expressions in both languages. In addition, multimodal resources such as Chinese and English images, videos, and audio materials were used to support comprehension.

View: English was the primary instructional language, but the strategic use of Chinese helped reinforce comprehension. Bilingual note-taking was encouraged, allowing students to record key points in both languages to strengthen their retention of information. To deepen comprehension, translation and paraphrasing tasks were integrated, prompting students to compare language structures and improve their accuracy in English.

Review: Students were encouraged to discuss comprehension questions in Chinese first before expressing their answers in English. Peer collaboration played a key role, as students worked together in pairs or small groups, using both languages to support each other's learning. Lastly, intercultural communication remained an important component, encouraging students to reflect on how language and culture interact, thereby deepening their understanding of multilingual and multicultural perspectives.

2. Participants

The participants of this study were 42 non-English major undergraduates enrolled in the College English Reading and Writing course taught by the researcher at a provincial university in southwest China. These students were selected through purposive sampling, as they belonged to a naturally formed class in which the intervention could be conveniently implemented.

The participants came from three majors: Music, Dance, and Aviation Service Art and Management, but they were all taking the same English course. All of them had completed high school English education and passed the national college entrance examination. Their English proficiency was at the B1 level of the CEFR.

3. Instructional Instrument

The lesson plans for this study focused on using translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in English reading instruction. The main part of the study was conducted during two lessons per week for nine weeks. Prior to this, three EFL experts with more than five years of experience validated the lesson plans using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) form. After calculating the scores, the results showed that all aspects of the lesson plans had IOC indices greater than or equal to 0.67. One expert suggested revising time allocation. Another expert recommended that it would be clearer to highlight the key content in the "teaching content" section. Following these suggestions, the researcher revised the lesson plans accordingly.

4. Research Instruments

The English reading comprehension tests included parallel pre- and post-tests, each comprising five reading passages of varying lengths. The first four reading passages were followed by multiple-choice questions, with each passage containing five questions, resulting in a total of 20 multiple-choice questions. The last reading passage was a banked cloze test with 10 questions. The tests assessed literal and inferential comprehension based on Herber's (1978) three levels of reading comprehension.

Sample questions are provided below:

Literal comprehension:

Everyone went on a journey around the world except _____.

A. Ferdinand Magellan   B. Jules Verne

C. Nellie Bly   D. Steve Fossettt

Inferential comprehension:

What is the main purpose of this reading passage?

A. To illustrate the importance of having a variety of skills.

B. To compare entertainment of the past to that of the present.

C. To illustrate how a person used art to overcome shyness.

D. To explore a lesser-known talent of a famous writer.

The tests were reviewed by three experts and validated using the IOC form. After calculating the scores, the results showed that all aspects of the test had IOC indices greater than or equal to 0.67, indicating strong content validity. One expert suggested revising the instructions for the first part of the test in order to increase their clarity. After expert validation, the researcher

conducted a pilot study. Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7) confirmed that the question could be retained in the formal test.

To explore the opinions of Chinese undergraduates towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Week 11 after the post-test. Based on the translanguaging to teach mentioned by García and Wei (2014), which focuses on the key concept of teaching flexibility, three open-ended questions were developed and validated by the same experts using the IOC form. After calculating the scores, the results showed that the validity scores of all interview questions were greater than or equal to 0.67, which was considered appropriate and acceptable. One expert suggested changing "using different languages" to "using English and Chinese" to make the question clearer for the interviewees.

5. Data Collection

The data collection process was designed to systematically evaluate the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates. Students were given 60 minutes to complete the pre-test in the first week, and the same test format was administered in the 11th week as a post-test.

Following the post-test, six students were randomly selected for one-on-one semi-structured interviews to explore their opinions towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction. Each interview lasted approximately 8-10 minutes and was conducted online in Chinese, with participants' consent to record.

6. Data Analysis

The study involved both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and paired sample *t*-tests were used to analyze differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

The qualitative interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis to gain deeper insight into students' opinions towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction.

Results

The research findings are divided into two parts according to the research objectives, as follows:

Research objective 1: To investigate the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates.

To determine whether using translanguaging in English reading instruction could improve Chinese undergraduates' English reading comprehension, a paired sample *t*-test was conducted on the pre-test and post-test results of parallel forms of the English reading comprehension test.

The paired sample *t*-test result revealed a significant improvement in students' English reading comprehension scores following the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction. The mean score increased from 7.452 on the pre-test to 15.643 on the post-test, indicating a statistically significant difference (p < .05) (Table 1).

Table 1

Comparison Results of the Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	42	7.452	2.442	7.948	0.000***
Post-test	42	15.643	6.555		

*Noted: *p < .05*

Since the undergraduates' English reading comprehension was mainly assessed at two levels, literal comprehension and inferential comprehension, the results of the paired sample *t*-test revealed statistically significant improvements at both levels.

For literal comprehension, the mean score of the students increased from 3.69 on the pre-test to 9.071 on the post-test (Table 2). For inferential comprehension, the mean score of the students increased from 3.762 on the pre-test to 6.571 on the post-test (Table 3). In both levels, the differences were statistically significant at the p < .05 level.

Table 2

Comparison Results of the Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores on Literal Comprehension

Test	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	42	3.69	1.615	8.679	0.000***
Post-test	42	9.071	3.718		

*Noted: *p < .05*

Table 3

Comparison Results of the Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores on Inferential Comprehension

Test	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	42	3.762	1.59	5.15	0.000***
Post-test	42	6.571	3.336		

*Noted: *p < .05*

In conclusion, although the students' pre-test scores on the English reading comprehension test were generally low, their post-test scores were considerably increased in both literal comprehension and inferential comprehension compared with the pre-test scores, with a more marked improvement in literal comprehension. These results demonstrate that the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction could improve students' literal and inferential comprehension.

Research objective 2: To explore the opinions of Chinese undergraduates towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction.

To explore Chinese undergraduates' opinions towards translanguaging English reading instruction, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with six students after the post-test. Their responses were translated into English for analysis.

Most students had a positive attitude towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction, and their responses were categorized into three main themes:

1. Improving understanding and learning efficiency

Students noted that translanguaging helped them grasp complex concepts, especially with regard to challenging reading passages, and improved their reading efficiency, accuracy, and memory. Some also felt that it enhanced their listening and speaking skills.

Student 1: "It enhances memory, helps remember information faster, and improves understanding of foreign perspectives and cultures. The teacher's bilingual explanations helped me overcome obstacles and boosted my reading speed and problem-solving skills." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

Student 2: "Although it is a reading class, for students like us, who since childhood have been deeply influenced by 'dumb English' that focuses only on exercises rather than on expression, it can also improve our oral communication and listening skills." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

2. Reducing learning pressure and increasing learning interest

Translanguaging was seen as reducing the pressure of English-only instruction and creating a more comfortable learning environment. However, some students mentioned becoming overly reliant on the teacher's Chinese explanations.

Student 1: "This combination of English and Chinese is not too stressful when learning and has increased my interest in English reading." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

Student 2: "The downside may be that I still rely too much on the teacher's explanations in Chinese. It is easier to absorb information when it's presented in Chinese." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

3. Meeting the needs of students with different English proficiency levels

The flexible use of translanguaging supported students with different levels of English proficiency. Those with lower levels felt more willing to participate in classroom learning.

Student 1: "It depends on the difficulty of the texts. For more difficult texts, using more Chinese helps me understand the content better. But for simpler ones, teaching in English and Chinese is fine for me." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

Student 2: "When the teacher explains in Chinese or simple English, I can understand enough, so I don't completely fall behind in the course content." (personal communication, via WeChat, November 15, 2023)

In conclusion, students valued the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction as a supportive and flexible approach that improved their English reading comprehension and engagement, despite minor concerns about language dependence.

Discussion

The results of this research are discussed in two aspects: the students' English reading comprehension and the students' opinions.

1. Students' English reading comprehension

Many researchers have shown that translanguaging allows students to use their L1 and L2 simultaneously to gain a better and deeper understanding of the texts, which increases their reading comprehension (Alasmari et al., 2022; García, 2009; Vaish & Subhan, 2015; Zhang & Jocuns, 2022). Thus, the findings of this study support the results of previous studies. The quantitative data analysis indicates that the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction significantly improved students' English reading comprehension. The evidence was that the students' post-test mean score were higher than the pre-test mean score at the significance level of 0.05, and the improvement in literal comprehension was more significant than that of inferential comprehension.

There are several reasons why integrating translanguaging into English reading instruction is effective. First, translanguaging allows students to process the reading of texts twice, in two different languages. By reading a text in both English and Chinese, students can digest the content more thoroughly. As Vaish and Subhan (2015) mentioned, the conversation on the text could be in Malay and English with the pedagogical purpose of increasing comprehension in English. Second, translanguaging enables students to switch languages purposefully during different classroom activities. This language alternation provides students with multiple perspectives on the same text, which encourages them to develop deeper insights and more meaningful connections. Third, integrating translanguaging into classroom activities creates a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. Students can use both English and Chinese to express their ideas and clarify their understanding. This dual-language scaffolding is particularly advantageous for students with lower English proficiency. The reason why students improved more significantly in literal comprehension may be due to the emphasis on lexical and syntactic scaffolds (e.g., bilingual vocabulary lists) in the instruction, which directly contributes to students' literal comprehension.

The findings of this study further confirm that translanguaging improves students' English reading comprehension by increasing flexibility, encouraging active participation, and bridging language and cultural gaps. The post-test results showed that the students' English reading

comprehension improved significantly, highlighting the effectiveness of translanguaging to support their learning process. However, it is important to acknowledge that factors such as students' increased familiarity with the test format may have also contributed to the observed improvement in reading comprehension. While this effect cannot be entirely ruled out, the study aimed to minimize it by using familiar question types and ensuring that translanguaging was the primary instructional variable.

In addition to test data, classroom observations conducted throughout the 9-week instruction provided qualitative support for the effectiveness of translanguaging. The researcher noted that students appeared more engaged and confident when allowed to use both English and Chinese during reading activities. These qualitative observations support the quantitative results, indicating that translanguaging contributed not only to better reading comprehension scores but also to increased confidence and engagement during reading instruction.

2. Students' opinions

The results from the semi-structured interviews revealed that most students had a positive attitude towards the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction. This finding aligns with Fang and Liu (2020). Students generally appreciated the use of translanguaging because it improved their understanding and learning efficiency. In addition, the use of translanguaging in English reading instruction reduced students' learning pressure and increased their interest in learning. These results aligns with Alasmari et al. (2022) and Zhang and Jocuns (2022).

However, some students also mentioned challenges, such as relying heavily on the teacher's Chinese explanations, which could be related to the L1-oriented teaching method commonly used in previous English education in China.

Despite meaningful findings, the small sample (n = 42) and short instruction (9 weeks) limit generalizability. In addition to these methodological limitations, it is also worth considering other potential factors that may have influenced students' performance. For example, students' increased familiarity with the test format and classroom routine over the 10-week period could have contributed to their improved performance. Additionally, motivational factors such as peer interaction, increased teacher support, or students' growing interest in reading topics might have played a role. Although these factors were not the primary focus of the study, they may have interacted with the instructional intervention to influence students' performance and perceptions.

Recommendation

Pedagogical Implications

The study investigates the effects of translanguaging in improving English reading comprehension among Chinese undergraduates. The results indicate that translanguaging significantly improved students' English reading comprehension. Therefore, teachers or researchers could implement translanguaging in Chinese undergraduate English education, especially in English reading instruction. It not only helps Chinese undergraduates improve their understanding of complex texts and concepts, and different cultures, but also increases students' interest and engagement in learning English.

Recommendation for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations for further research can be proposed in terms of the participants of the population, the duration of the English reading instruction, and the design of a comparison group. First, the current study only included a small sample of 42 students; thus, future research should expand the sample size and include students from different backgrounds, ages, and English proficiency levels to enhance the applicability of the results. Second, due to the short duration of instruction in this study, the long-term effects are still unclear. Therefore, it is recommended that long-term research be conducted in the future in order to examine the sustained effects of translanguaging on students' English skills. Third, as this study employed a one-group quasi-experimental design without a comparison group, in future research, a comparison group design should be employed to further verify the unique contribution of translanguaging and strengthen the credibility of the research results.

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