

Review

# Examining Pedagogical Translanguaging: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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**Abstract:** In the past two decades translanguaging has proven to be a potent concept in applied linguistics, having generated a large amount of literature that explores theoretical and empirical dimensions of this linguistically inclusive pedagogical approach to language teaching and learning. This systematic literature review focuses on empirical studies that draw on the translanguaging framework in English language teaching (ELT) and beyond. Following PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews, this study aims to shed light on the current state of knowledge about the affordances of translanguaging pedagogies in a plethora of educational contexts worldwide and to highlight possible avenues for future research. Eleven databases were searched to obtain a dataset spanning from 2011 till February of 2021 and yielding nearly 3000 publications. After duplicate removal, abstract screening, and application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, a total of 233 studies were coded and analysed to address the research questions. As a result, this systematic review synthesizes the state of knowledge on pedagogical translanguaging, with the aim to inform educators about developments in this rapidly growing field and support researchers in identifying future research priorities on the subject of drawing on learners' full linguistic repertoires for linguistically inclusive education.

**Keywords:** pedagogical translanguaging; systematic literature review; ELT; empirical research



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## 1. Introduction

In the past two decades translanguaging has proven to be a potent concept in applied linguistics, and in multilingual contexts in particular. The concept has generated a large amount of literature that explores theoretical and empirical dimensions of translanguaging as a linguistically inclusive pedagogical approach to language teaching and learning, and as a transformative bilingual practice that entails “using . . . one’s linguistic repertoire without regard for socially and politically defined language labels or boundaries” (Otheguy et al. 2015, p. 297). This systematic literature review focuses on empirical studies that draw on the translanguaging framework in English language teaching (ELT) and beyond, i.e., the scope of this review includes but is not limited to the contexts where English is taught as a target or one of the target languages. Other contexts include using English in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and as a medium of instruction (EMI). The study aims to present the current state of knowledge concerning the affordances of translanguaging pedagogies in a plethora of educational contexts worldwide and to highlight possible avenues for future research.

Translanguaging in language teaching has played an important role in promoting the normalization of bilingual language practices and stimulating new pedagogical approaches based on a flexible use of languages in the language classroom (Prada and Turnbull 2018). The term *translanguaging* was conceived in an educational context by the Welsh educator Cen Williams (1994, 1996) to denote a planned teacher-initiated pedagogical activity based on a purposeful concurrent use of two languages within a lesson or task. For Williams, translanguaging is a valuable strategy that should be encouraged and utilized in bilingual language classrooms to promote children’s development in both languages.

In the last two decades or so, the concept has gained a strong position within the field of multilingualism research as an umbrella term for various means of incorporating the entire linguistic repertoire of an individual language user to achieve communicative goals in varied communicative contexts and modalities (García 2012). In this review, I focus on research on translanguaging in its classroom application, where languages are used in a flexible and functional manner in order to further literacy in both or all languages (Lewis et al. 2012). Put differently, this research draws on translanguaging pedagogy understood as “the instructional mobilization of students’ full linguistic repertoire and the promotion of productive contact across languages” (Cummins 2019, p. 21).

For the purposes of this review, it is worth highlighting the distinction between a pedagogical or classroom form of translanguaging and its spontaneous or universal manifestation (Lewis et al. 2012; Cenoz 2017; Cenoz and Gorter 2017). Pedagogical translanguaging is consistent with its original conceptualization by Williams (1994, 1996) as it refers to a specific pedagogical strategy planned or facilitated by teachers and based on the use of students’ whole linguistic repertoire (Cenoz 2017). In contrast, spontaneous translanguaging, as Cenoz and Gorter (2017) explain, occurs inside and outside of educational settings and thus “refers to the reality of bi/multilingual usage in naturally occurring contexts where boundaries between languages are fluid and constantly shifting” (p. 904). In this research, I chose to focus my analysis on studies of the pedagogical form of translanguaging because of a gap in research on classroom application of translanguaging. The gap was outlined initially by Creese and Blackledge (2010) and Canagarajah (2011), and, more recently, by other researchers (Andrei et al. 2020; Cummins 2019; Galante 2020) who, despite a growing number of publications since 2010 onwards, call for more empirical research which can underpin the translation of translanguaging theory into practice. Hence, there appears to be a contradiction between a rapid growth in the amount of literature on translanguaging on the one hand, and continuing calls for more research on classroom translanguaging on the other hand. This indicates a need for a systemic literature review to be conducted with the aim to take stock of recent developments in the field and to flesh out those facets of translanguaging that call for more research in the future. Furthermore, a systematic literature review focusing on empirical studies that draw on the translanguaging framework seems to fill a gap in review studies in this area. To the best of my knowledge, the most recent literature review on translanguaging is Poza’s (2017) study which examines 53 papers published between 1996 and 2014 and attends to the theory and exemplifications of translanguaging. It follows then that the present review offers an updated piece of research that extends the previous investigation to other areas of translanguaging research that might be of interest to researchers and practitioners alike. These areas concern first and foremost empirical aspects of translanguaging research in ELT and in other English-related educational settings, such as its context, methodology, and the issues of classroom application of translanguaging pedagogies.

Following PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Page et al. 2021), the present study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. What characterizes empirical studies on translanguaging in terms of their context (educational settings, geography, participants, languages), research objectives, and methodology?
2. According to the analysed corpus of studies, what are the factors enabling and constraining classroom application of translanguaging?
3. Based on the analysed corpus of studies, what specific avenues for future research on pedagogical translanguaging can be proposed?

Eleven databases were searched to obtain a dataset spanning from 2011 till February of 2021 and yielding nearly 3000 publications, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Databases and search results.

Database	Search Results
Cambridge Journals Online	32
ERIC	552
JSTOR	108
MLA	119
ProQuest	315
SAGE	223
ScienceDirect	249
Scopus	797
Teacher Reference Center	56
Web of Science	398
Wiley Online Library	127
Total	2976

As a result of duplicate removal, abstract screening, and application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, a total of 233 studies (Supplementary Material) were coded and analysed to address the research questions (The corpus of studies is available online at <https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/8fg5jhp9pc/2>; accessed on 26 October 2022). This systematic review seeks to transparently and accurately synthesize the state of knowledge on translanguaging research, with the aim to inform educators about developments in this rapidly growing field and support researchers in identifying future research priorities regarding translanguaging pedagogies in a multitude of ELT contexts and beyond.

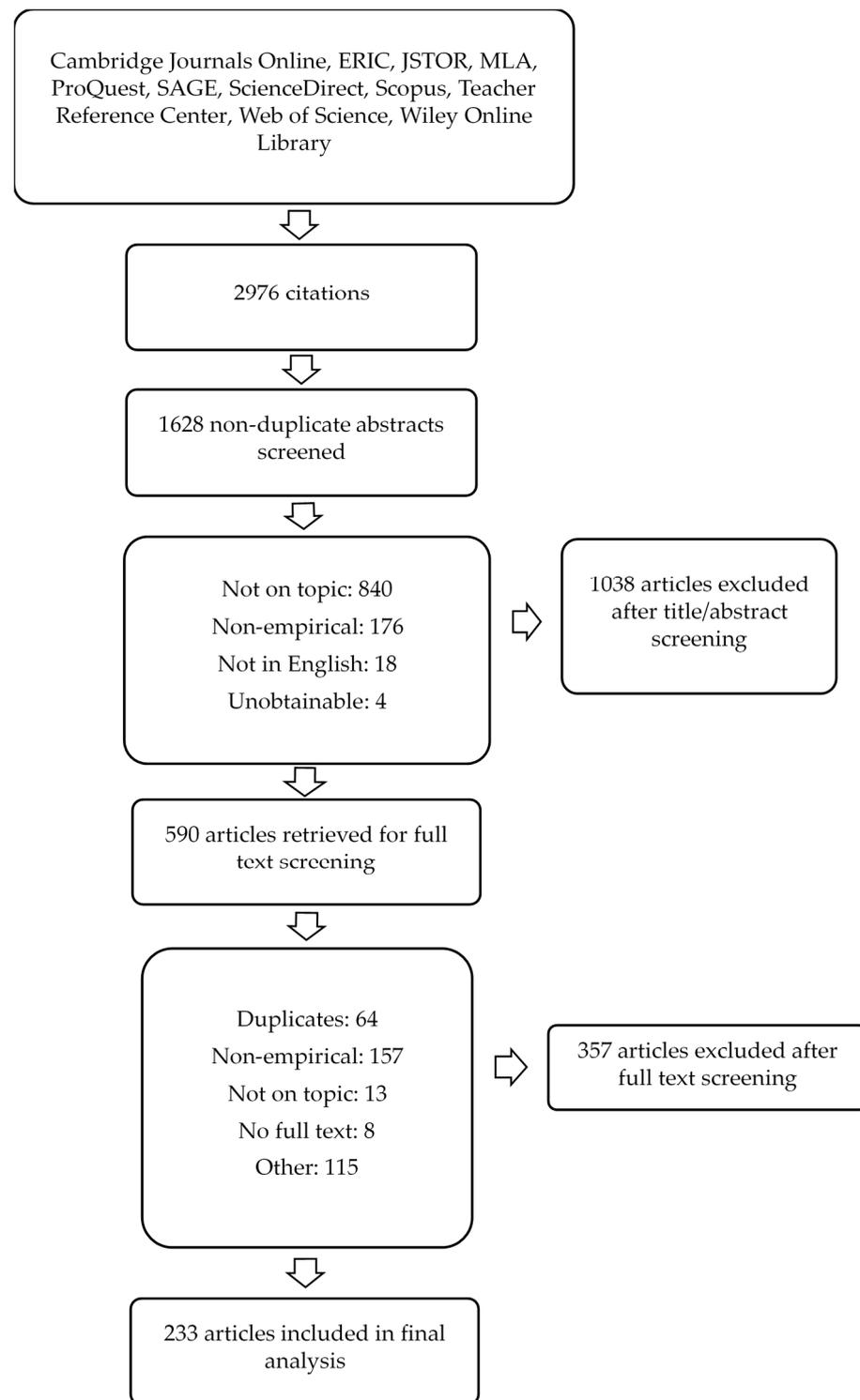
## 2. Methodology

In this paper, I carried out a multiphase review procedure of the literature in accordance with PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Page et al. 2021). Overall, the procedures included: (i) a systematic database search, (ii) initial title/abstract screening, (iii) full-text article screening, and (iv) full-text article coding using NVivo software for qualitative data analysis. Overall, this review is a mixed-methods research involving quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis. Figure 1 gives a summary of the search procedures step by step:

To begin with, I searched 11 databases using “translanguaging” as a stand-alone search item and in combination with “pedagogical” or “classroom translanguaging” to obtain the largest possible number of relevant citations irrespective of the scope of the database in question. The databases chosen for the review were accessible through my online university library and included both large multidisciplinary databases, such as Scopus or Wiley Online Library, and smaller, discipline specific ones, such as ERIC or Teacher Reference Center. The systematic search targeted all available online citations starting from 2011 up to 12 February 2021 since the number of publications on translanguaging seems to have been increasing incrementally from 2011 onwards, as shown in Figure 2 below. The apparent fall in the number of publications in 2021 reflects the status as of 12 February 2021 and does not automatically signify a decrease in a total number of publications that year.

Where possible, I set the search parameters to capture scholarly and peer-reviewed publications that were journal articles or book chapters because these made up most of the publications on translanguaging according to a document type, as illustrated in Figure 3:

Another reason for targeting peer-reviewed articles and book chapters was to make sure that the data for subsequent coding and qualitative analysis contained high quality scholarly works. The systematic database search resulted in 2976 citations in total. After automatic duplicate removal, I proceeded to the initial screening of 1628 non-duplicate abstracts.

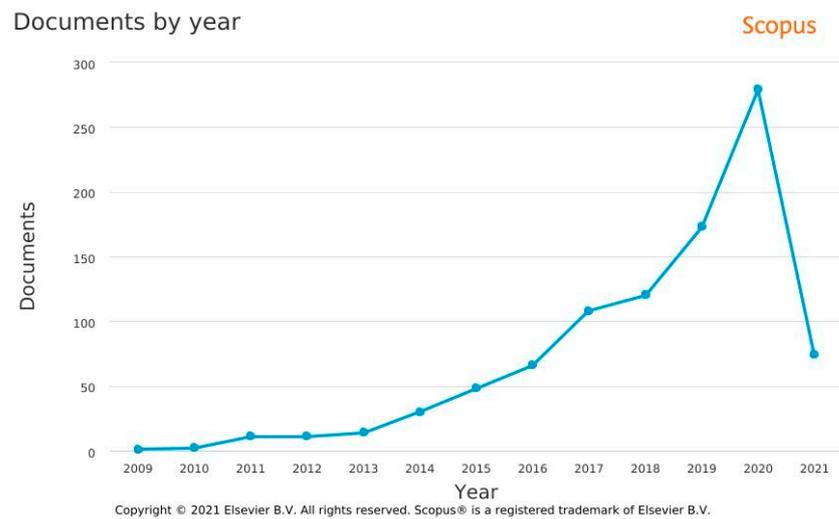


**Figure 1.** PRISMA flow diagram (generated using PRISMA Flow Diagram, <http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/FlowDiagram>, accessed on 25 March 2021).

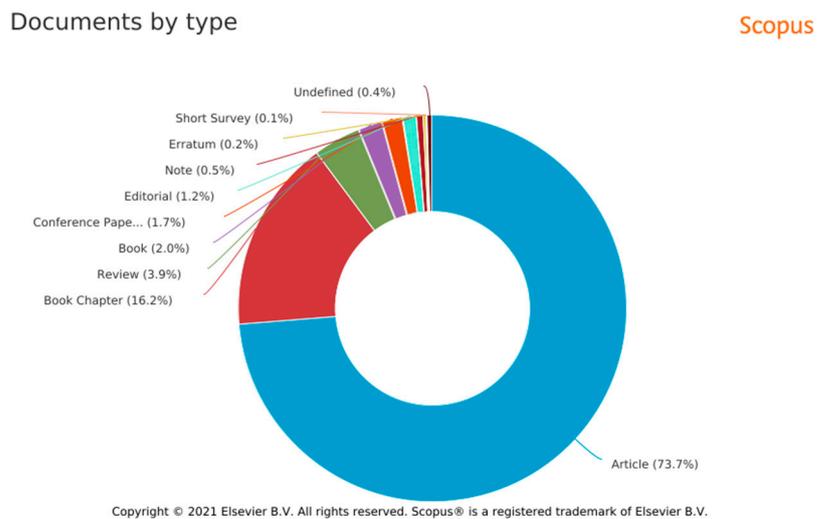
First, I screened the abstracts to determine whether the paper reported on empirical or non-empirical research. By empirical research, I refer to papers that draw primarily on empirical data, either qualitative or quantitative, or a combination of those. Consequently, 176 abstracts were identified as non-empirical and excluded from further analysis. These were theoretical pieces, policy papers, reports, bibliographies, and program descriptions.

Next, the empirical studies abstracts were examined across the following criteria for exclusion:

- 840 abstracts were excluded for being not on topic, that is, they presented research on translanguaging practices outside of formal educational settings, for instance, translanguaging in social media, in health care, in marketplaces, places of worship, and other social arenas;
- 18 abstracts were not in English;
- 4 abstracts could not be obtained even after requests were sent to other libraries;
- As a result of the initial title/abstract screening, 1038 abstracts were excluded, leaving 590 articles for full-text screening. During the full-text screening, more articles were excluded. These were:
  - 64 duplicates;
  - 157 non-empirical articles;
  - 13 articles for being not on topic;
  - 8 articles with no full-text available.



**Figure 2.** Publications on translanguaging by year (<https://www.scopus.com/home.uri>, accessed on 12 February 2021).



**Figure 3.** Publications on translanguaging by document type (<https://www.scopus.com/home.uri>, accessed on 12 February 2021).

In addition, the full-text screening revealed that another 103 articles failed to fully meet the main criteria for inclusion, i.e., articles must report on empirical research. In case of these 103 articles, the empirical data from the classroom were used as examples of pedagogical translanguaging. In other words, these were primarily theoretical pieces that drew on a limited number of examples of translanguaging as mere illustrations of the theoretical arguments discussed in the paper. Despite providing authentic examples of translanguaging practices, these papers lacked some of the essential elements of empirical papers, such as a detailed account of the educational settings, methodology, ethical considerations, discussion of validity issues or/and limitations and suggestions for further research. Therefore, these papers did not contain the information necessary for the coding procedure and thus could not contribute to answering the research questions of this systematic literature review. An additional 12 articles were excluded because translanguaging was not the main theoretical framework employed in these papers, despite mentioning translanguaging in the theory section and/or as one of the key words. Together, the described 115 articles were treated as a separate exclusion category labelled as “Other” in Figure 1. The relatively large number of articles that make up the “Other” exclusion category in this review supports the fact that translanguaging research is multifaceted and covers a wide range of topics, which necessitates the use of clearly defined criteria in order to examine certain aspects of translanguaging in depth.

To sum up, 233 articles met all the inclusion/exclusion criteria and served as the corpus for this review. These 233 articles were identified as being peer-reviewed, empirical, on topic and employing translanguaging as their primary theoretical framework. Further, they were in English and published between 1 January 2011 and 12 February 2021.

The main analysis that followed entailed full-text article coding using NVivo software for qualitative data analysis. The corpus of 233 articles was coded across the following categories:

- Context: educational settings, geography, languages, participants;
- Research questions(s)/research objective(s);
- Methodology: quantitative, qualitative, mixed;
- Method(s) of data collection;
- Findings;
- Future avenues.

Having given a detailed description of the methodology employed in the review, I now turn to the presentation of the results.

### 3. Results

I structure this section in accordance with the research questions.

#### 3.1. What Characterizes Empirical Studies on Translanguaging in Terms of Their Context (Educational Settings, Geography, Participants, Languages), Research Objectives, and Methodology?

I start with the educational settings that the selected studies are placed in. Regarding level of education, the following levels were identified in the corpus: pre-school (age 3–5), primary/middle school (age 6–12), secondary (age 13–16), upper-secondary (age 17–18), and tertiary level (above 18). In addition, studies that had to do with teacher professional development courses were grouped into a separate category to distinguish them from the tertiary level. The raw frequencies and percentage frequency distribution of the levels of education are given in Figure 4:

When examining the educational settings, I also looked into the types of programs/courses. I found the following:

- Complementary or heritage schools with mixed age groups of learners;
- CLIL classes at primary, secondary and upper-secondary levels;
- Dual language (DL) or bilingual classrooms at all levels of education;
- English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at tertiary level;

- Sheltered classes for newly arrived immigrants at primary, secondary and upper-secondary levels;
- Mainstream English classes with English being labelled as second (ESL), foreign (EFL), additional (EAL) or new language (ENL).

Next, I coded the papers with regard to the geographical settings. Figure 5 gives an overview of the geographical settings identified in the corpus:

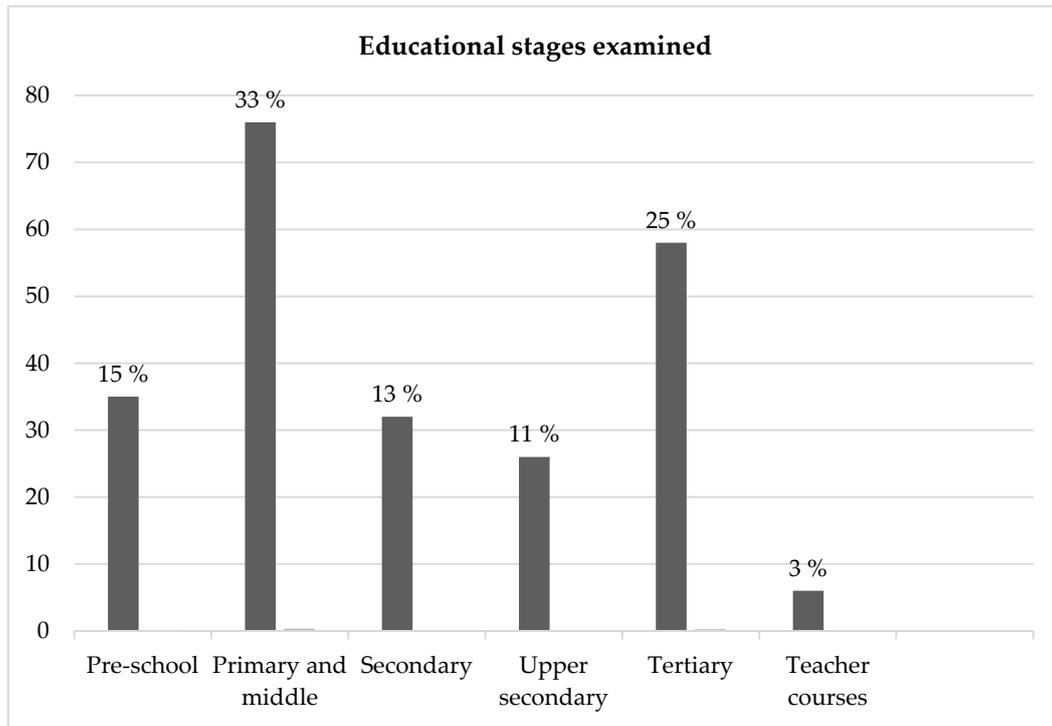


Figure 4. Educational stages examined.

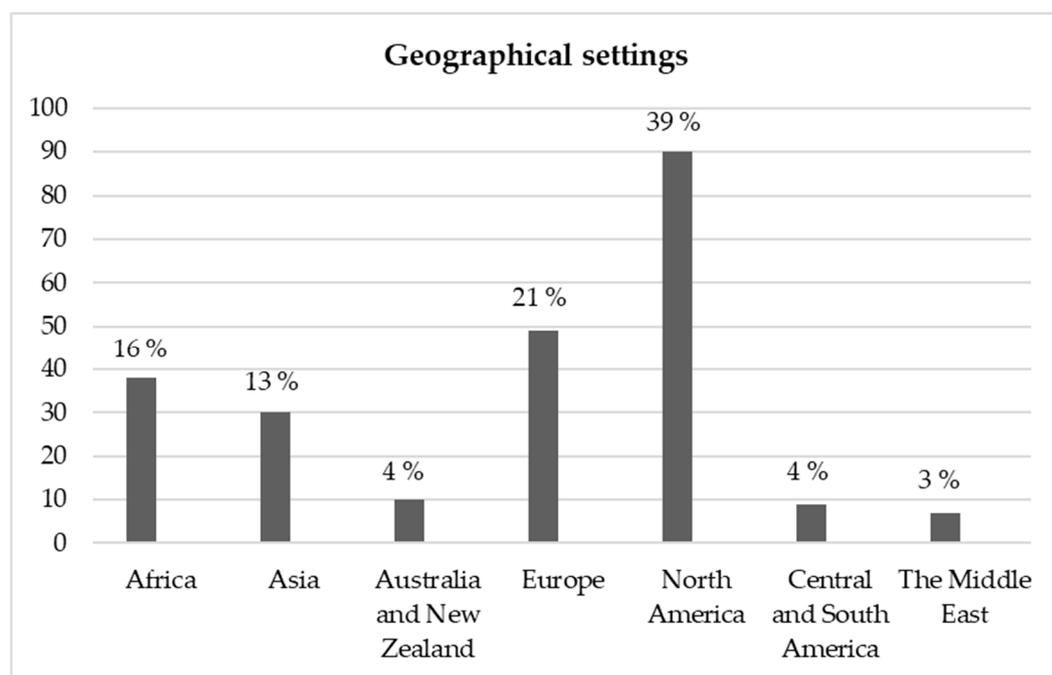


Figure 5. Geographical settings.

Some countries were represented to a larger degree than others. For instance, the majority of studies in North America examined translanguaging in the US context (the US-Mexico border and Puerto Rico included), while Sweden, the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain, Belgium, and Luxemburg were among those European countries/communities that had a larger presence in the corpus compared with other European territories. Further, South Africa, Japan, and China appeared in most of the studies placed in the African and Asian contexts respectively.

When coding across the participants subcategory, I distinguished between two dimensions. First, I examined whether a study had a primary focus on students, teachers, or both. Second, I looked into the participants characteristics that were outlined by the author(s), apart from age and/or level of education. With respect to the first dimension, 128 articles (55%) examined students' attitudes, language practices or/and behaviour, 64 articles (27%) focused on teachers, and 41 articles (18%) studied both learners and teachers. The participants' characteristics had a logical connection to the types of programs outlined earlier. For instance, researchers recruited heritage speakers, emergent and proficient bilinguals/multilinguals, non-native and native English-speaking professionals, newly arrived immigrants, and learners of English as a target language or one of the target languages.

Regarding languages, English dominated the corpus, both as a target language and as one of two languages in DL programs. The second most dominant language was Spanish, as a target language or learners' L1. Other languages in the corpus included Afrikaans, American Sign Language, Arabic, Basque, Bosnian, Chinese, Dari, Dutch, Farsi, Filipino, Finnish, Flemish, French, German, Hindi, Irish, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Japanese, Korean, Luxembourgish, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Samoan, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Sotho, Swedish, Tagalog, Tausug, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xitsonga, and others. In most cases, these languages were learners' L1.

Now I move on to the results of coding across the category of research objectives of the studies. The qualitative analysis yielded several themes or aspects of pedagogical translanguaging that researchers set to investigate in a multitude of English-affiliated contexts. These included:

- Language use and functions of translanguaging practices in teacher-learner and peer interaction;
- Perceptions of translanguaging practices among teachers and/or learners, including teacher and learner beliefs about use of L1/home/minority languages in the classroom;
- Focus on the measurable effects of translanguaging on learners' performance and language learning;
- Investigation of the way teachers' language ideologies interact with teaching practices and thus influence students' translanguaging;
- Mapping of existing language policies and exploring how these may shift from monolingual to multilingual as a consequence of translanguaging-based interventions;
- Examining the affordances of translanguaging-based approaches in relation to various assessments practices;
- Looking into the way translanguaging strategies may mediate learners' emotional well-being, alleviate language learning anxiety, and reduce negative behaviours;
- Exploring the role of translanguaging pedagogies in co-construction of emergent bilingual students' identities as well as in promoting social justice through equity in education;
- Investigating translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. For instance, how its use may improve students' metalinguistic awareness, reading comprehension, oral skills, and vocabulary acquisition.

The remaining part of the first research question concerns methodology employed in the studies. In this category, I first coded the studies on the basis of their methodological approach, i.e., qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. I found that 194 studies (83%) employed qualitative methodology, 7 studies (3%) employed quantitative

methodology, and 32 (14%) were mixed methods studies. Further, when zooming in on the qualitative studies, I found that linguistic ethnographic methods were utilized in the majority of these studies. To be specific, almost all of the studies employed a combination of the following approaches to data collection: audio and/or video recordings, semi-structured or in-depth interviews, open-ended questionnaires, think-aloud protocols, field notes, participant observations, and collection of learners' work. These were predominantly case studies focusing on few or a single participant. The quantitative studies were quasi-experimental intervention studies that employed a survey or a group comparison design, including pre- and post-test designs. As for the mixed methods studies, these mainly involved a combination of a test or quantitative survey paired up with classroom observations and/or semi-structured interviews.

I now proceed to the next stage of the analysis to address the second research question.

### *3.2. According to the Analyzed Corpus Studies, What Are the Factors Enabling and Constraining Classroom Application of Translanguaging?*

To answer this question, I carried out a thematic analysis of the papers to elicit information about the factors. Though most papers did not contain an explicit discussion of the factors enabling and constraining the classroom application of translanguaging, it was possible to infer the relevant information from the sections reporting findings or outlining possible implications of the research. Below I lay out three subsections pertaining to the main themes identified in the corpus, i.e., stakeholders, context, and activity type. Quotes from a number of selected papers are provided to illustrate the themes derived from the data.

#### *3.2.1. Stakeholders*

The most salient theme that emerged from the analysis concerns teachers' perceptions of translanguaging practices and multilingualism in general as well as how these shape teaching practices and classroom ecology. To put it briefly, three distinct views on translanguaging could be identified: translanguaging as a problem and an obstacle in learning a target language; translanguaging as a natural linguistic practice and process; and translanguaging as a valuable resource in the classroom. As [Axelrod \(2017\)](#) demonstrates in her study, when teachers held a positive view on translanguaging, they "created an environment where children's language(s) usage was supported, encouraging children to explore and play with language(s) and allowing them to bring into the classroom the hybrid language practices that they were experiencing in their homes and communities" (p. 109). In addition to creating a linguistically inclusive learning environment to mediate language learning, teachers' views on bilingualism as a social and cognitive resource facilitated the implementation of translanguaging pedagogies as a purposeful strategy to recognize and utilize linguistic resources that students bring into the classroom. This idea is emphasized by [Carroll et al. \(2020\)](#) in their study of translanguaging-based practices in the context of an evolution course at a bilingual Puerto Rican university:

Viewing their students as successful bilinguals was essential in that, from the outset, students were not seen to have linguistic deficits, which could have resulted in the professors simply believing they would not be successful in the class based solely on their language proficiency and not on their understanding of course content. ([Carroll et al. 2020](#), p. 13)

However, while teachers' attitudes tend to be powerful mediators of new pedagogical practices in the classroom, a positive view on translanguaging does not necessarily translate into rigorous learner-centred teaching practices, as noted in [Mwinda and van der Walt \(2015\)](#) and [Yuvayapan \(2019\)](#). Similarly, [Ganuza and Hedman \(2017\)](#) warn against "using the term pedagogical translanguaging in contexts where multilingual practices are used by teachers and students without reflection and/or without a deliberate aim to mediate learning" (p. 219). The authors stress the need to provide teachers with a thorough and explicit theoretical and instructional training on how to draw on students' linguistic

repertoires. Likewise, in their study of translanguaging in CLIL, [Nikula and Moore \(2019\)](#) argue:

it would be helpful for teachers to have an overall understanding of translanguaging, not only as a pedagogic strategy to support learning but also as a feature of natural bilingual discourse, which they and their students can employ according to the situational demands ([Nikula and Moore 2019](#), p. 245)

Several researchers have proposed a solution to the issue of teachers' self-reported, as well as observed, need for guidance when it comes to translanguaging pedagogies. The solution comes in the form of pre-service teacher education, in-service professional development courses, and researcher-teacher collaborations involving focus on translanguaging pedagogies in specific educational contexts. For instance, [Gorter and Arocena \(2020\)](#), p. 9) argue that "an in-service professional development course can change the beliefs of in-service teachers about insights into multilingualism and principles of translanguaging". In similar terms, according to [Gynne \(2019\)](#), "there are indicators that learning more about translanguaging pedagogies and employing translanguaging strategies has entailed a shift for the teachers, teacher practices and possibly even teacher identities" (p. 364). In a similar way, reporting on a study of language ideology shifts among Mexican American/Latinx pre-service bilingual teachers, [Caldas \(2019\)](#) concludes:

This study shows that providing participants with exposure to theory and research on different language ideologies in the field, paired with a first-hand experience of a translanguaging space in an academic setting, facilitates future teachers' willingness to engage and embrace the contradictions and complexities of their role(s) as bilingual teachers and the realities and demands of educating Mexican American/Latinx emergent bilingual students in the current socio-political climate. ([Caldas 2019](#), p. 13)

Along the same lines, in the context of teaching English for academic purposes (EAP), [Liu et al. \(2020\)](#) show a shift towards a more sophisticated understanding of the potential advantages of translanguaging pedagogy in the given context. The shift in understanding and capacity to use translanguaging pedagogy is a result of a year-long researcher-teacher collaboration, suggesting that "researcher-teacher collaboration can be an effective strategy in helping in-service EAP teachers to reflect on and change their beliefs and practices while the process could be discursive" (p. 1).

Another theme frequently discussed alongside teacher training programs and researcher-teacher collaborations as factors enabling pedagogical translanguaging, deals with the issue of educational policies and ideologies at the level of school authorities. As [Allard \(2017\)](#) explains here:

translanguaging functioned as an important discursive tool that emergent bilingual teachers and students used to communicate across language differences in the beginner ESL classes. In spite of its apparent utility, however, it existed within an inhospitable ecology of policies, practices, ideologies, and relationships, which tempered its pedagogical and interpersonal power. ([Allard 2017](#), p. 120)

In other words, school leaders' role is critical in shaping the environment, language policies and consequently teaching practices, and must be taken into account as another major factor determining whether translanguaging pedagogies take root in practice ([Ascenzi-Moren et al. 2016](#)). To exemplify this, [Krause and Prinsloo \(2016\)](#), in their ethnographic study of translanguaging practices in a township primary school in South Africa, describe a conflict between teachers and institutional policies that undermine teachers' efforts to create a learning environment in which students may draw on their entire linguistic repertoire in their learning process:

We find that teachers apply the language resources at their disposal with some skill to make learners engage with subject content. However, the institutional language ideologies that materialize in the school's language policy and in test-

ing regimes, turn such skilful language practices from an asset into a relative disadvantage. While aware that they are transgressing the principal's language policy as well as knowing that their students are struggling with monoglossic examination requirements, teachers continue to translanguange for the pedagogic advantages this brings, despite the rigid, separatist language ideologies that inform school management. (Krause and Prinsloo 2016, p. 347)

Perhaps, the most notable example of the sort of impediment that the lack of sustained educational policy and curriculum support may have to the implementation of translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms, comes from Costley and Leung's study (2020) which examines the challenges of enacting translanguaging pedagogy in mainstream state-funded schools in England. After examining policy documents and classroom data as well as conducting interviews with experienced language educators, the authors conclude:

There is rhetorical celebration of multilingualism in the policy documents and this is reflected in the interviewees favourable attitudes towards multilingualism themselves. However; at the same time because of the lack of positive engagement and encouragement at the policy level there is no real culture or widespread practice in schools of using languages as flexible resources that can be meaningfully deployed for learning and assessment purposes . . .

Rather than being regarded as a resource for classroom learning and assessment, multilingualism can be seen as more of a classroom management issue (Costley and Leung 2020, p. 10).

Furthermore, learner characteristics and beliefs constitute another important factor that influences the way translanguaging may be construed, negotiated, and enacted. As a case in point, Afitska (2020) argues that for translanguaging-based approaches to succeed, "learners need to have: (1) good, or at least adequate, literacy skills in their home language(s), (2) sufficient understanding of the subject matter under discussion and, preferably, the lexis needed for it, (3) well-developed, general study skills . . ." (p. 176). Next, with respect to learners' beliefs, Beiler (2021) brings attention to the fact that not only teachers but also students may need "to interrogate the language ideologies that push them to perceive majoritized language practices as appropriate in school and minoritized translanguaging—their own or others'—as antisocial, suspicious, or perhaps valuable only for communication within linguistically minoritized homes and social arenas" (p. 27). However, in a language inclusive learning environment, students are shown to be an important resource in enacting translanguaging (Hansen-Thomas et al. 2020) and creating "translanguaging spaces for meaning making in collaboration with peers and institutional actors" (Kaufhold 2018, p. 1). Another aspect of student translanguaging that is worth highlighting is addressed by Mendoza (2020) who points to the fact that students may choose to use their linguistic resources in the classroom both to include and exclude others, thus opening up or closing down opportunities for others. The author argues that more attention should be given to the way(s) languages are employed to index inclusivity and social responsibility.

To round off the stakeholders theme, I turn to Zapata and Laman's (2016) study of translingual writing instructions in predominantly Latino ESL classrooms placed in the US. The authors examined children's language and literacy practices within writing workshops and how teachers developed translingual approaches to writing. The study showed that because teachers themselves did not possess all the linguistic resources available in the classrooms, they engaged children's family and community members in their workshops. As Zapata and Laman explain:

If we desire to build classrooms where children develop metalinguistic awareness that can serve their writing, then we must welcome family and community members, lift their ways with words for children to appreciate, and elevate the dynamic and ever-changing nature of languages as resources for writing. (Zapata and Laman 2016, p. 376)

### 3.2.2. Context

The context theme involves certain contextual factors that researchers found to be enabling or constraining in terms of the classroom application of translanguaging. These factors relate to contextual aspects in a narrower sense, such as a program type or design, languages involved, and the availability of learning materials. For example, [Adamson and Yamauchi \(2020\)](#) explored translanguaging perceptions and practices among tertiary-level practitioners of CLIL and EMI courses in Japan and found that translanguaging seemed to be favoured in CLIL and EMI instructional contexts. The authors argue that in these types of programs, there is a shift in emphasis “from language proficiency development to a more inclusive and ‘safe’ content-based assessment of students, giving more agency, especially to linguistically lower proficiency, yet content-wise highly proficient, students. This acts to destigmatize feelings of linguistic incompetence by decentring monolingual interaction policy” (p. 111). In addition, Adamson and Yamauchi found that university EMI instructors “encouraged CLIL instructors to equip students with translanguaging skills in preparation for future EMI instruction” (p. 111).

Another contextual factor, this time a constraining one, is related to an organizational or design aspect of a particular program or course. This is exemplified by [Lang \(2019\)](#) in her study of structural features of a newcomer program in an American comprehensive high school. Lang found that newcomer students were provided with “safe spaces” for translanguaging practices by physically separating them from their classmates to reduce language anxiety. The author’s critique of such conceptualization of a “safe space” is summed up as follows: “Ultimately, by interpreting translanguaging as a way to avoid discomfort rather than to leverage newcomers’ dynamic bilingualism, this particular conceptualization of safe space afforded limited opportunities for the development of English language and literacy practices” (p. 73).

Further, in the context of trilingual schools in the Basque Country, several researchers ([Cenoz and Gorter 2017](#); [Cenoz and Santos 2020](#); [Leonet et al. 2017](#)) address the compatibility issue between pedagogical translanguaging and the need to protect, maintain, and revitalize minority languages, in this case, the Basque language. In Cenoz and Gorter’s paper (2017) the authors point out that there is a policy of strict language separation in Basque-medium schools, with the aim to protect and develop proficiency in Basque. Hence, a novel translanguaging approach is often met with scepticism or even a blunt rejection among community members, policy makers, and teachers. However, as exemplified through classroom data analysis by [Cenoz and Gorter \(2017\)](#) and by [Cenoz and Santos \(2020\)](#), pedagogical translanguaging can and should be viewed as compatible with the need to protect and sustain regional minority languages in the context where English is one of the target languages.

Next, the analysis of the enabling or constraining factors regarding the implementation of pedagogical translanguaging revealed that certain characteristics of languages themselves could create obstacles for learner translanguaging. This has been reported by speakers of certain African languages in [Carstens’ \(2016\)](#) study that explored the use of translanguaging as a strategy to support tertiary level bi-/multilingual students in South Africa in acquiring academic literacy in English. In particular, IsiXhosa, Tshivenda, and Sepedi L1 speakers reported that utilizing their L1 knowledge through translanguaging-based activities complicated their understanding of conceptual content in English due to either much internal variation in their L1, its complexity or the lack of specialized vocabulary.

Finally, studies placed in the African context ([Charamba 2020a, 2020b](#); [Omidire and Ayob 2020](#)) also discussed the importance of instructional materials in students’ home languages not only for translanguaging-informed interventions involving English and one of the African languages to be successful, but also for providing students with “a reflective space to think about how language stratification has excluded African languages that are deemed inferior from the classroom, hence from accessing scientific knowledge” ([Charamba 2020a](#), p. 655).

### 3.2.3. Activity Type

Perhaps not surprising, considering the collaborative nature of translanguaging as a feature of bi-/multilingual discourse, researchers highlight collaborative learning through group activities as a factor that facilitates pedagogical translanguaging (Martin-Beltrán 2014). For instance, Ramchander (2020) observed tertiary-level students in South Africa working on assignments in English and concluded that “when multilingual students engaged in group work, there was a tendency of gravitation towards translanguaging which resulted in students having a better understanding of assignment questions” (p. 74). Similarly, Banda (2018) showed that group discussions in English, Xhosa and both languages allowed all learners to participate and translanguage in order to find the solution to a task. Importantly, the author points out that such translanguaging-based group work has another advantage, i.e., it “provides peer-learning opportunity as the less proficient in English learn from the more proficient learners” (p. 213).

This concludes the analysis of the factors enabling and constraining the classroom application of translanguaging and brings us to the next subsection that attends to the third research question.

### 3.3. Based on the Analyzed Corpus of Studies, What Specific Avenues for Future Research on Pedagogical Translanguaging Can Be Proposed?

The answer to the final research question sheds light on the future of research on pedagogical translanguaging. It is worth noting that not all researchers voiced their ideas with regard to future research. Among the proposed possible future research directions, I was able to extract the following endemic themes (example studies are referenced in brackets):

- More research on translanguaging in teacher education and continuous professional development of all teachers in order to facilitate sustainable translanguaging in praxis beyond a single intervention (e.g., Costley and Leung 2020; Deroo et al. 2020; Martínez et al. 2015);
- More ethnographic sociolinguistic studies to examine the role of translanguaging in the development of learners’ hybrid identities, language ideology, and language development (e.g., Abourehab and Azaz 2020; Axelrod 2017; Parmegiani 2014);
- More small-scale investigations of translanguaging practices to examine whether these are transferrable to other contexts (e.g., Adamson and Yamauchi 2020; Esquinca et al. 2014; Makalela 2015a);
- More research on how translanguaging works in mainstream English classes (e.g., Afitska 2020);
- More projects to influence policy makers and the discourse on translanguaging in ELT and language education in general (e.g., Aitken and Robinson 2020);
- More research focusing on the translanguaging practices and interliteracy skills of young emergent bilingual children as well as across the developmental spectrum (e.g., Axelrod and Cole 2018; Velasco and García 2014);
- More rigorous, longitudinal research in school settings where translanguaging pedagogies have been adopted to explore the long-term impact of these pedagogies (e.g., Back 2020; Mwindi and van der Walt 2015; Vaish and Subhan 2015);
- More studies involving Latinx and African Americans of different ages in DL classrooms across a variety of contexts (e.g., Bauer et al. 2016; Durán and Palmer 2013; Gort and Sembiente 2015; Palmer et al. 2014);
- More research on the role of parents, extended family, and community members in learners’ language learning process in school context (e.g., Fang and Liu 2020);
- More research on translanguaging in assessment practices (e.g., Li and Luo 2017; Prilutskaya and Knoph 2020);
- More research on the effect of translanguaging on learning outcomes, including the relationship between learners’ proficiency level and the effects of translanguaging on language learning (e.g., Mgiijima and Makalela 2016; Makalela 2015b; Turnbull 2019).

In sum, several areas where future research is timely and warranted have been highlighted by a number of authors.

#### 4. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

As explained in the introduction, I conducted the present literature review with the aim to take stock of recent developments in research on translanguaging pedagogies in English-affiliated settings and to identify possible avenues for future research. In the initial stage of this investigation, I carried out a multiphase review procedure of the literature in accordance with PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Page et al. 2021). As a result of the screening procedures described in detail in the methodology section, I focused my analysis on the corpus of 233 empirical studies that drew on the translanguaging framework and met all the inclusion criteria that were set up for this investigation in order to address its research questions.

The first question in this study sought to determine the characteristics of empirical studies on translanguaging regarding the context, research objectives, and methodology. With respect to this research question, I found that the selected studies represented a plethora of English-related contexts in terms of educational and geographical settings, as well as languages involved. However, the results indicate that translanguaging have been studied more frequently in primary/middle and tertiary educational contexts, and that North America and Europe were represented to a larger degree than other geographical areas (see Figures 4 and 5). A possible explanation for this might be that translanguaging has been popularized by García and other researchers working in the context of bilingual or dual language classrooms in the US. Another reason might be an increase in the number of English as a medium of instruction programs at tertiary level worldwide due to the internationalization of education.

Next, regarding the participants category, I found that researchers focused more on students (55% of the studies) than on teachers (27%), and only a small proportion of the studies recruited both students and teachers (18%). As for the languages, apart from English dominating as a target and as one of two languages in dual language programs, Spanish was found to be the second most represented language, both as a target language and learners' L1. Again, this might be connected to the US context factor. In addition, it is important to note that current research on translanguaging is found to depict a multitude of learners' L1s.

Concerning the research objectives, I identified a range of aspects of pedagogical translanguaging that researchers found worth examining, such as language use in peer and teacher-learner interactions, learners' and teachers' perceptions of translanguaging practices and pedagogies, teachers' language ideologies and their interaction with language policies and students' translanguaging in the classroom, affordances of translanguaging in relation to assessment practices, content and language learning. Other researched facets of translanguaging included its role in mediating learners' emotional well-being, alleviating language learning anxiety, reducing negative behaviour, and, importantly, co-construction of emergent bilingual students' identities and promoting social justice through equity in education. Such a wide spectrum of topics indicates a rich potential for research on translanguaging in language education.

Finally, with regard to the methodology, a disproportionately large number of studies (83%) employed qualitative methodology, whereas quantitative studies amounted to only 3% of the corpus, and 14% were mixed-method studies. One interesting finding was that almost all of the qualitative research identified as linguistic ethnographic case studies that focused on few or a single participant. The reason for this might be that linguistic ethnography as a methodology is a good fit for the very nature of translanguaging as an individual and communicative practice since linguistic ethnography is "... an interpretive approach which studies the local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and considers how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures" (Copland and Creese 2015, p. 13).

Based on the results obtained to answer the first research question, it can be assumed that a typical study on pedagogical translanguaging in English-related contexts would be a small-scale case study that is placed in the North American or European context, that focuses on students' language practices or/and perceptions and employs methods of linguistic ethnography to collect and analyse qualitative data. This raises concerns regarding the potential generalizability of translanguaging pedagogies, given the geographical and methodological disproportionality identified in the corpus of studies examined. In particular, a predominance of small-scale qualitative studies needs to be addressed by researchers by conducting more controlled intervention and/or mixed-method studies in order to make more substantiated claims regarding the affordances of classroom translanguaging beyond the studied contexts. It follows that to develop a more comprehensive picture of the classroom application of translanguaging pedagogies in English-affiliated educational contexts across the world, particularly in terms of its transferability and long-term effects, additional studies may be needed to make sure a broader range of educational and geographical settings are studied, and multifarious methodological approaches are employed to do so.

The second question in this research concerned the enabling and constraining factors with respect to classroom application of translanguaging. The thematic analysis revealed several factors related to three main themes: stakeholders, context, and activity type. In sum, teachers', students', and school leaders' positive perceptions of translanguaging pedagogies in conjunction with a thorough and explicit theoretical and instructional training on *why* and *how* to draw on learners' entire linguistic repertoire in ELT and other settings are shown to act as powerful facilitators of successful and sustainable implementation of translanguaging-based practices. Regarding the context theme, I found that translanguaging seemed to be favoured in CLIL and EMI instructional contexts. This might be explained by the emphasis on content-based learning rather than language proficiency, which is intrinsic to these programs and which may help mitigate strict monolingual interactional policy that is often in place (Adamson and Yamauchi 2020). Another enabling factor was identified in connection with the activity type theme and involved the facilitating role of collaborative leaning activities in promoting translanguaging in the classroom. As far as constraining factors are concerned, apart from what has been discussed in relation to the stakeholders, these had to do with obstacles related to the complexity and certain structural characteristics of learners' L1, some organizational aspects of a program or course, a perceived conflict between translanguaging and the need to protect and maintain minority languages, and the lack of instructional materials in learners' L1.

To answer the final research question, I looked into possible avenues for future research on pedagogical translanguaging as proposed by the authors of the analysed studies. First, the proposed directions related to the methodological aspects of research, which has been partially discussed earlier in this section in connection to the first research question. Specifically, researchers call for more rigorous, longitudinal studies to explore the long-term impact of translanguaging pedagogies on learning outcomes across the developmental spectrum and in a variety of contexts (e.g., Axelrod and Cole 2018; Back 2020). However, there were also calls for more small-scale investigations and ethnographic studies, particularly with respect to research on the development of students' hybrid identities and language ideologies (e.g., Abourehab and Azaz 2020; Adamson and Yamauchi 2020). This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that such types of studies have been found to be overrepresented in the corpus in this review.

Second, researchers stressed the need for more research in teacher education and continuous professional development courses for teachers, school leaders, and policy makers for sustainable translanguaging practices to go beyond a single intervention (e.g., Aitken and Robinson 2020; Deroo et al. 2020). This corroborates the findings reported in this review, namely a paucity of studies in teacher education (Figure 4), and the fact that collaborations involving researchers and stakeholders are shown to be an effective strategy if we want translanguaging pedagogies to take hold and develop.

To conclude, this review has its limitations. These are related, for instance, to its focus on Anglophone literature, its search procedures, the choice and application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and the time frame. Notwithstanding possible limitations, the findings of this systematic literature review of empirical studies on pedagogical translanguaging provide insight into the current state of knowledge on translanguaging with respect to its classroom application across a spectrum of English-affiliated contexts worldwide. Further, since this review examined the characteristics of current studies regarding their context, methodology, and research design, it contributes to our understanding of the *source* of our knowledge on pedagogical translanguaging in terms of the strengths and limitations of current research, as defined by the scope of the review. Lastly, this review may help lay the groundwork for future studies on translanguaging in ELT and beyond by pointing to the future avenues for research needed to move the field forward.

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