

Teaching and Learning in Fragile Contexts (TLFC)

Research Paper



Leveraging Multilingual Classroom Realities for Grade 3 Learners' Literacy Development in Kakuma Refugee Context

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Plain Language Summary

This study looked at how to improve reading skills for Grade 3 children living in and around Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Many children in refugee settings speak different languages at home from the language used in school (often English). This difference in can make learning to read and understand lessons very difficult for the refugee children.

To address this, the researchers tested a teaching method called **Translanguaging**. This approach allows children to use all the languages they know—both their home language and the school language—when learning. For example, children can discuss ideas in their home language and then share answers in English.

The study involved four schools with both refugee and local children. Some classes used the translanguaging approach, while others continued with regular teaching methods. The researchers compared learners' performance in reading comprehension before and after the Translanguaging lessons.

What the study found

The results showed that:

- Learners who used translanguaging improved their reading skills more than those who used regular teaching methods.
- All learners benefited from the use of the translanguaging approach, regardless of gender.
- Learners from refugee background showed particularly strong improvement, most likely because they could use familiar languages to understand new concepts.

Teachers also shared positive feedback:

- Learners were more engaged, confident, and willing to participate.
- Lessons became more interactive and enjoyable.
- Learners were better able to understand and discuss reading materials.

However, teachers noted some challenges:

- Lessons took more time to plan and deliver.
- More teaching materials were needed, especially in different languages.
- Managing multiple languages in one classroom required careful organization.

Why this matters

The study shows that language is a major barrier to learning for many refugee children. When children cannot understand the language used in school, they may feel frustrated or lose motivation.

By allowing children to use their home languages, translanguaging:

- Helps them understand lessons more easily.
- Builds confidence and participation.
- Supports better reading and literacy outcomes.

Key recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- Schools should consider using translanguaging because it helps children learn better in classrooms where many languages are spoken. This may mean updating education policies.
- Governments and NGOs should allow children to use their home languages in early grades. This helps them feel included and makes learning easier, especially for refugee children.
- Education leaders should support translanguaging by including it in national policies, school programs, and learning materials—especially for younger learners.
- Teacher training programs should teach teacher trainees how to use translanguaging in the classroom.
- Schools should provide books and materials in different languages so children can learn in both English and their home language.

Using children's home languages in the classroom is not a barrier but a powerful tool for learning. In multilingual and refugee contexts, approaches like translanguaging can significantly improve literacy and help children succeed in school.



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INTRODUCTION

This research was a pilot study conducted in Kakuma refugee context in Kenya to evaluate the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach for early grade learners. The pilot study focused on developing grade 3 learners' reading comprehension skills, using a Translanguaging Instructional Module that was prepared by the researchers.

This report begins by giving a brief background on what prompted the study and further outlines the objectives and the hypotheses of the study. The methodology that was adopted for the study is also outlined, concentrating on sampling of schools and the steps to undertake in a Translanguaging lesson. In addition, the report discusses the findings of the study, which include outcomes from the classroom context and the teachers' responses/views on the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module. Further the report presents the challenges that the researchers faced during the research period, and towards the end, the report outlines some conclusions and gives recommendations based on the research findings.

A Brief Background to the Study



Research has shown that refugee children face numerous challenges in their attempt to access quality education, among them being language of instruction (UNHCR *Global Review of Education*, 2011). This language challenge is brought about by the fact that refugee set ups are mostly multilingual. According to Lyons (1981) multilingualism is the co-existence of several languages within a society where these languages can be official or unofficial, native or foreign and national or international. A refugee camp is in this case a multilingual set up because it is a conglomeration of people from

different countries speaking different languages. Multilingualism can also refer to the situation of using two or more languages by an individual or community of speakers (Baker, 2006). It is the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency. School going children in such multilingual contexts often find themselves in a language dilemma where the language of instruction is sometimes different from the language spoken at home. Hang M. Le (2021) argues that there is a growing recognition that language is a central issue in refugee education, whether in pre-resettlement, post-resettlement, or repatriation

settings. Le however notes that despite this recognition of language learning as a significant issue for refugee children, on the whole, existing research and policies in refugee education have rarely addressed the need for explicit language planning and the formation of language-in-education policies in refugee contexts. This planning would include decisions over which language(s) will be the language of instruction, how they will be taught, or how different languages will be promoted. Le further points out that in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, language issues in education are largely invisible with a de facto language policy that is derived from the larger agenda of integration into the Kenyan national education system, which prioritises English as the language of instruction. According to Piper, Dryden-Peterson, Chopra, Reddick, and Oyanga (2020) many of the refugee pupils attending school in Kakuma are from different countries and they speak many different languages, and this multilingual situation creates differences in the literacy outcomes among the refugee children, depending on their country of origin, the language of instruction used at the school in Kenya, the languages spoken at home, and the children's self-professed expectation of a return to their country of origin. The challenges multilingualism presents in learning for refugee children are further presented in a report by the Lutheran World Federation Kenya-Djibouti Program (2023) which quotes Burundian children in Kakuma who stated that they did not feel motivated to continue with their schooling as they could not understand lessons due to language of instruction related issues. Ajúlia Palik and Gudrun Østby (2023) also argue that because of the numerous challenges that refugee children face in accessing quality education, there is need for systematic evidence on what works to improve refugee children's enrolment and learning. It is from such a background that this study piloted the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach for grade 3 learners in developing literacy in Kakuma refugee context in bid to test instructional avenues that can be used to enhance literacy for early grade learners.



As an instructional approach, Translanguaging ensures that learners are able to think in multiple languages simultaneously and therefore being able to use their home language as a vehicle to enhance learning because as

Baker (2006) argues, home language in the classroom is regarded as linguistic capital which can be used as a resource to spark on children's literacy development.

Translanguaging therefore brings together the learners' entire linguistic repertoire (home and new languages) in ways that create spaces for deeper and more complex thinking (Fu, Hasjioannou, & Zhou, 2019; Espinosa & Lerner-Quam, 2019).

The Study Objectives:

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine the effect of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach on Grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension.
2. To assess whether there was any significant difference in learners' achievement in reading comprehension between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach.
3. To evaluate the effect of the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by gender.
4. To establish the challenges teachers face in the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module in developing grade 3 learners' reading.
5. To evaluate the effect of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach in developing grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by learners' status (Host vs Refugee)

Research Hypotheses and Research Questions

1. H_01 : The use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach does not have any effect on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension.
2. H_02 : There is no significant difference in grade 3 Learners' achievement in reading comprehension between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach.
3. H_03 : There is no significant difference in grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by gender between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach.
4. H_04 : There is no significant difference in grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by learners' status (Host vs Refugee).
5. What challenges did teachers face in the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module in developing grade 3 learners' reading comprehension?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods approach and applied the Solomon four quasi-experimental group research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) for testing of the proposed hypothesis. The design entails the use of 4 groups as shown in Table 1, to be able to compare learners' reading achievement across the four groups subjected to different instructional approaches and assessment carried out at different times.

Table 1: Solomon four quasi-experimental design.

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
E ₁	X ₁	TLIM	X ₂
C ₁	X ₁	No intervention	X ₂
E ₂	O	TLIM	X ₂
C ₂	O	No intervention	X ₂

Key

E₁: Experimental group 1

C₁: Control group 1

E₂: Experimental group 2

C₂: Control group 2

X₁: Pre-test

X₂: Post-test

O: No test

TLIM: Translanguaging instructional module

(Source: Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The experimental group E1 and Control group C1 were subjected to a pre-test (X1) for comparable characteristic. Groups E1 and E2 were subjected to the treatment (teaching using the Translanguaging Instructional Module - TLIM). All the groups (E1, C1, E2, and C2) were subjected to the post-test (X2). The pre-test and post-test consisted of test items testing learners reading comprehension skills. The test item construction took into consideration the grade level and learners' linguistic abilities in a second language. To avoid contamination of results of the study only one class from each school was selected to take part in the study. A total of four schools were therefore selected to participate in this study. To establish the challenges teachers faced while using the Translanguaging Instructional Module in developing grade 3 learners' reading comprehension, a teachers' questionnaire was administered after the post-test.

The results of this pilot study provide critical insights on the use of learners' home languages for the development of children's literacy skills in a multilingual setting, which helps to improve learners' literacy outcomes in fragile contexts in general and in Kakuma refugee context. The findings of this study also help in providing the recommendations at the end of this report, which are crucial for policy formulations on the language of instruction in refugee contexts in Kenya.



Sampling of Research Schools:

Four schools from Turkana West Sub-County, Kakuma Division, Pelekech Zone were sampled for this study. Schools in this zone are known as host schools, that is, they have refugee learners as well as host community learners. The language clusters in the grade 3 stream in the sampled schools was as shown below:

Kakuma Arid Zone Primary School (C1)

The school had learners from 4 countries namely, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Somalia and the language clusters in grade 3 in the school consisted of Luhya, Kikuyu, Dholuo, Kimeru, Arabic, Kisomali, Kidinka, Nuer, Lotuko, D'ding'a and Acholi.

Nationkar Comprehensive School (C2)

The school had learners from 10 countries, that is, Kenya, Congo, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. The language clusters in grade 3 in this school consists of, Ng'aturkana, Arabic, Nuer, Toposa, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, Kipembe, French, Kirundi.



St. Michael Kakuma Mixed Comprehensive School (E1)

The learners in this school were from 6 countries, namely: Kenya, Sudan, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The language clusters included: Ng'aturkana, Luhya, Kikuyu, Nandi, Dinka, Nuer, Tobosa, D'Ding'a, Gambella, Kiswahili and Lotuko.

Pokotom Comprehensive School (E2)

The school had learners from 3 countries, including, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda and there were five (5) language clusters in grade 3, which included: Ng'aturkana, Arabic, Nuer, Karamojong and Kiswahili

Organization of the Lesson Based on the Translanguaging Instructional Module

The researchers prepared the Translanguaging Instructional Module and trained the teachers on how to use the Module in a classroom context. Observations on the use of the module were made during the learning process. The teachers were then allowed to use the module for some time before administering the post-tests. The activities to be undertaken during the lesson included the following steps:

Activation of learners' prior knowledge:

1. Introduce the text by asking the learners to say what they think the comprehension is about.
2. Learners give the home language equivalent of selected English language vocabulary.
3. Learners give the meaning of the selected vocabulary in their own home languages and English language equivalents.

Reading an English language comprehension text in small groups:

1. Group learners into their home language groups.
2. Learners read an English language comprehension text aloud in pairs or small groups, or silently and on their own.
3. Using their home languages, learners discuss specific aspects of either vocabulary, draw certain inferences or identify the main idea in that particular section.
4. Learners write down the responses in their exercise books/ workbook sheets.

Sharing responses with mixed home language groups:

1. Set new groups with different mixed home languages.
2. Ask learners to share their responses in their home languages and give a translation in English.

Whole class presentation:

1. During whole class presentation learners are allowed to use their home language to discuss how they will express their ideas first.
2. Allow pairs or groups of learners to present their responses to the rest of the class in English language.

FINDINGS

This section presents results and discussion from analysis of the pre-test and post-test data based on each of the four hypotheses of the study, and the analysis of the qualitative data collected through the teachers' questionnaire.

Pre-test Results

Results of the pre-tests were analyzed to establish whether the learners in the experimental and control groups had similarities in achievement before they were exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach. Learners in E1 (Kakuma mixed) and C1 (Kakuma Arid Zone) were subjected to a reading comprehension pre-test. The results indicate that E1 had a mean of 3.76 and C1 had a mean of 3.73. The mean difference between the two groups is 0.03 as shown in Table 2 below:



Table 2: Summary group statistics for grade 3 learners' pre- test scores for E1 & C1.

Group Statistics					
	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test Score	St. Michael Kakuma	51	3.76	1.716	.240
	Kakuma Arid Zone	55	3.73	1.840	.248

To establish whether the difference in means between learners' scores for the experimental and the control schools were statistically significant, a paired sample t-test analysis was conducted, and the results are captured in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Paired sample t-test analysis

	t	Df	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval
Scores	0.108	104	0.914	-0.037	[-0.648, 0.722]

($p > .05$)

The t-test analysis indicates that the means for the E1 and C1 were not statistically significant with t (0.108) and the p -value (.0914) being greater than the significance level of 0.05. This means that the learners in the two groups shared same reading

comprehension achievement levels before the experimental groups were exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

The Pilot study sort to test four hypotheses and data for each of the hypothesis is presented in the subsequent sections.

H₀1: The use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach does not have any effect on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension.

A paired t-test was carried out to determine whether the use of the Translanguaging module in class had an effect on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension and the results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test Score	3.75	106	1.773	.172
	Post-test Score	4.45	106	2.391	.232

From the paired Sample statistics, it is clear to note that the post-test mean for E1 is 4.45 and the pre-test mean is 3.75. The mean difference between the post-test and pre-test mean is 0.7. A further analysis was conducted to determine whether the mean differences were statistically significant using a paired sample t-test and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: A Paired sample t-test to determine the level of E1 learners' achievement between pre-test and post-test at $\alpha=0.05$ in the reading comprehension test.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	P Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-Test score - Pre-Test score	1.255	2.428	0.327	3.931	54	<0.001

The results from Table 5 indicate that the p-value is less <0.001 which is smaller than $\alpha=0.05$ and the t-statistic is 3.931. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, thus confirming that the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach had a statistically significant effect on learners' achievement in reading comprehension. These results concur with a study by Muyaya et.al (2024) which showed that the Translanguaging Instructional Approach has effect on improving learners' reading comprehension. The fact that grade 3 learners' reading comprehension scores had improved significantly after using the Translanguaging approach means that utilising learners' full linguistic repertoire is a significant step towards eliminating learner frustration and demotivation in reading texts written in English as a foreign language,

especially for refugee children whose first language is different from English. Research has shown that refugee children are often faced with a myriad of challenges in accessing quality education. Eliminating challenges related to language of instruction via the use Translanguaging is therefore a positive step towards solving learning challenges and improving literacy in multilingual contexts.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in grade 3 Learners' achievement in reading comprehension between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach.

To be able to compare the grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach (E1, E2, C1 & C2) a post-test reading comprehension test was administered to the four groups after the intervention. The means for each of the groups is presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Summary Table for the Experimental (E1, E2) and the Control (C1, C2) groups Post-test means and standard deviations for grade 3 learners in the research schools

School Category	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Kakuma Mixed (E1)	4.98	55	2.198
Pokotom (E2)	3.76	49	1.702
Kakuma Arid Zone (C1)	3.88	51	2.479
Nationokar (C2)	2.25	51	2.077
Total	3.74	206	2.339

Experimental school one (E1) posted a superior mean of 4.98 as compared to the Experimental school two (E2) 3.76 and Control schools C1 (3.88) and C2 (2.25) respectively. The mean difference within the groups is 1.22 for the experimental schools and 1.63 for the control schools. A further analysis using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the mean differences were significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA (Post-test Scores)					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	198.341	3	66.114	14.469	.001
Within Groups	923.023	202	4.569		
Total	1121.364	205			

The ANOVA analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in means between the experimental and control groups. The p value is less <0.001 which is smaller than $\alpha =0.05$. This means that there was a significant difference in the means between the experimental group (E1 & E2) and the control group (C1 & C2). To establish

which of the groups differed significantly a Tukey Honest Significant Difference (HSD) post-hoc test was carried out. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Tukey Honest Significant Difference (HSD) Post-hoc test

(I) Learning Category	(J) Learning Category	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental 1	Control 1	1.099*	.416	.043
	Control 2	2.727*	.416	.000
	Experimental 2	1.227*	.420	.020
Experimental 2	Control 1	-.127	.428	.991
	Experimental 1	-1.227*	.420	.020
	Control 2	1.500*	.428	.003
Control 1	Experimental 1	-1.099*	.416	.043
	Control 2	1.627*	.423	.001
	Experimental 2	.127	.428	.991
Control 2	Control 1	-1.627*	.423	.001
	Experimental 1	-2.727*	.416	.000
	Experimental 2	-1.500*	.428	.003

The mean difference is significant $\alpha = 0.05$ level

The results from Table 8 show that the means of E1 differed significantly with the means of C1(1.099), C2 (2.727) and E2 (1.227). This is because the mean difference between E1 and C1(0.043), C2 (0.000) & E2 (0.020) are less than the significance level of $p < 0.05$ significance level. The statistical mean difference between E2 and E1 as shown above was significant. This may have been brought about by Test wiseness for group E1. Test wiseness is the ability to use the characteristics and formats of a test to maximize scores regardless of knowledge. Though this was not an intended object of the study, research has shown that test wiseness has a significant effect on learners' academic achievement (Aborisade & Adeniji, 2022). However, group E2 differed significantly with C2 but did not register a significant difference with C1. The mean for C1 differed significantly with E1 & C2 although C2 is a control group. This difference in means may be an indication that the learners in the two groups though sampled as control groups may have had different reading comprehension competencies by the time of carrying out the intervention.

It is significant to note that the mean differences in grade 3 learners reading comprehension achievement between the Experimental and the control schools can be attributed to the effect of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach. Through the use of this approach, learners had the opportunity to utilise shared prior language experiences to enrich their discussion in attempting to make meaning of the comprehension texts written in English they were exposed to during reading lessons.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by gender between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach.

To be able to analyze whether there was any significant difference in grade 3 learners reading comprehension by gender between those exposed to the Translanguaging Instructional Approach and those exposed to the conventional instructional approach, a two-way analysis of variance was carried out as shown in Table 9 and 10.

Table 9: Summary Statistics on Grade 3 Learners' Achievement in Reading Comprehension by Gender.

Between-Subjects Factors			
		Value Label	N
control vs experimental	1.00	Control	100
	2.00	Experimental	106
Gender	F		78
	M		128

The total number of learners who participated in this study were 206, with those in the control group being 100 while those in the experimental group were 106. In terms of gender, there were 78 females and 128 males from both the experimental and the control schools.

Table 10: Two-Way ANOVA on effect of intervention by gender.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Score					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	112.589 ^a	3	37.530	7.515	<.001
Intercept	2684.498	1	2684.498	537.552	<.001
Treatment	111.497	1	111.497	22.326	<.001
Gender	.004	1	.004	.001	.976
Treatment * Gender	2.478	1	2.478	.496	.482
Error	1008.775	202	4.994		
Total	4007.000	206			
Corrected Total	1121.364	205			

a. R Squared = .100 (Adjusted R Squared = .087)

The results from Table 10 indicate that the Translanguaging Instructional Approach had a significant effect on grade 3 learners' reading comprehension achievement (p value 0.001 which is less than 0.05). The p value for gender is 0.976 which is higher than the

0.05, meaning that gender had no significant influence on grade 3 learners' reading comprehension achievement. The results further indicate that there was no interaction between the treatment and gender on the learners' reading comprehension achievement (0.496) which is greater than 0.05. In conclusion the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach did not have any effect on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by gender.

H₀4: There is no significant difference in grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by learners' status (Host vs Refugee).

To be able to analyze whether there was any significant difference in grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by status (Kenyan or Refugee) a two-way analysis of variance was carried as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Summary statistics on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by status.

Dependent Variable:	Score		
Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Kenyan	3.21	1.595	28
Refugee	4.84	2.053	76
Total	4.40	2.065	104

The total number of grade 3 learners who took part in the intervention in the two experimental schools E1 and E2 were 104. The refugee learners were 76 with the learners from the host community (Kenyans) being 28 as shown in Table 10. To determine the relationship between their reading achievement by status, a Two-Way ANOVA analysis was carried out, and the results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Two-Way ANOVA on Effect of Intervention by Learner Status

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable:	Score				
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	54.219 ^a	1	54.219	14.371	0.000
Intercept	1328.065	1	1328.065	352.016	0.000
Status	54.219	1	54.219	14.371	0.000
Error	384.820	102	3.773		
Total	2456.000	104			
Corrected Total	439.038	103			

a. R Squared = .123 (Adjusted R Squared = .115)

Results from Table 12 indicate that the Translanguaging Instructional Approach had a significant effect on grade 3 learners' reading comprehension achievement (p value 0.000 which is less than 0.05). The p value for gender is 0.000 which is lower than the 0.05, meaning that learner status had a significant influence on grade 3 learners reading comprehension achievement. The use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach therefore had a significant effect on grade 3 learners' achievement in reading comprehension by learner status. The approach enabled refugee children to interact more and perhaps use their prior understanding, using a familiar language in making meaning of the comprehension texts written in English in the context of Kakuma. This shows that advocating for the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach in multilingual classrooms has potential to improve performance and therefore literacy levels in general.

Teachers' Response to the Use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module

In establishing whether there were any challenges faced by the teachers who interacted with the Translanguaging Instructional Module, a teachers' questionnaire was administered after the intervention. The results are presented in the narrative presented in the following paragraphs.

Demographic Details of the Teachers

The two teachers in the experimental schools were all female. One had a P1 and diploma qualification with a teaching experience of between 11-15 years while the other had a Bachelor of Education degree qualification with a teaching experience of between 6-10 years. The two teachers had taught grade 3 in their current stations for 4 years.

Teachers General Response to the questionnaire

With regard to the language of instruction policy in the experimental schools, the teachers indicated that English and Kiswahili were the main languages of instruction in grade 3. This was despite the fact that there were five (5) first language clusters in one school and eight (8) language clusters in the other of the schools sampled. In the E1 school, the teacher's home language (L1) was Nandi while the L1 for the teacher in E2 was Kiswahili. Both teachers in the two experimental schools indicated to have a good understanding and could fluently speak only two languages in the language clusters in their classes.

The teachers were asked to rate the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module on a number on attributes and they both agreed that Translanguaging can be used to cover a variety of topics and its use enhanced active learner participation because learners were lively and interacted freely during the lessons conducted via the

Translanguaging approach. This concurs with Poza (2017) who asserts that Translanguaging increases learners participation, motivation and confidence in a multilingual context (cited in Mufori et al, 2025). The teachers also reported that the use of the Translanguaging approach gave the learners a good opportunity to learn the use of more than one language from the other language clusters in their class as they shared their home experiences that were relevant in each reading comprehension. From the teachers' perspective the use of the Translanguaging approach made lessons enjoyable and the use of mother tongue ensured that learners were engaged more – raising the learners' confidence in classroom interaction.

The teachers' responses also indicated that despite the school language of instruction policy requiring the use of either Kiswahili or English as the language of instruction in Grade 3, Translanguaging did not cause any confusion in the teachers' lesson preparation and implementation during the pilot. This argument is supported by García & Kleyn (2016) who argue that multilingualism is not an obstacle to overcome but a normal, even advantageous, way of being and learning in an increasingly interconnected world (quoted in Mufori et al, 2025), as well as Baker (2006), who posits that home language in the classroom is regarded as linguistic capital which can be used as a resource to spark on children's literacy development, as mentioned earlier.

The teachers however indicated that using the Translanguaging approach brought additional demands. For instance, both teachers concurred that the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Module requires more instructional resources and time to complete the planned lesson activities. In addition, the teachers indicated that sequencing of lesson activities was challenging, and it requires the learners to be exposed to texts written in the home languages for easy reference.

From their responses, the teachers strongly felt that the Translanguaging Instructional Approach is an innovation that has the potential to revolutionise learners reading abilities in multilingual contexts. This approach becomes effective in the classroom because as Cenoz & Santos (2020) and Li & García (2022) have argued, it is a pedagogical approach that recognizes and leverages learners' full multilingual repertoires as valuable cognitive and cultural resources (cited in Mufori et al, 2025).

CHALLENGES

During the study period, there were various challenges experienced and the researchers had to devise ways to navigate through them as outlined below:

First, there were delays in getting an access permit to Kakuma Refugee settlement from the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Nairobi. The researchers could therefore not access schools under the mandate of UNHCR, which delayed many of the research activities. The researchers therefore sought permission from the County Director of Education in Turkana County in order to work with host

schools. The host schools are outside the camps under the jurisdiction of the UNHCR but there are many refugee pupils enrolled in host community schools. This was envisaged to give even richer data as the refugee pupils live in the camp and attend public primary schools outside the camp, giving them a chance to interact with children from the local community. Sampling from these host schools gave the research sample a mixture of languages spoken by refugees and those spoken by the local Kenyan communities. Despite the delays therefore, the research proceeded as per the set objectives and the sample sizes from the host schools were adequate to test the efficiency of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach.

Second, due to the delays mentioned above, the researchers adjusted their schedules from making the first visit to the schools in July – August 2024 (as per the original work plan) to January 2025. The subsequent visits to the field and activities were therefore pushed forward.

Third, the research team also faced a challenge on the utilization of funds as reflected in the original budget due the skyrocketing cost of fuel and the general cost of living. For example, the researchers had budgeted to use public transport from Lodwar to Kakuma, then hire a car to use to access the research schools but this seemed impossible as there was no reliable and timely public transport from Kakuma to Lodwar. The proposed pooled transport in Kakuma, budgeted at KES 20,000 therefore proved unrealistic. The researchers hired a vehicle for pick up from the airstrip in Lodwar and transport them to Kakuma and back, and in addition, take them around the research schools at a cost of KES. 15,000 per day for the first visit, and KES. 20,000 per day for the subsequent visits. These changes escalated the transport cost, and the researchers sometimes subsidized the travel cost (See Financial report).

Fourth, due to time and money constraints, the researchers merged the activities of 2nd and 3rd visit to the field into one visit in order to cover the unbudgeted costs, which also included the tokens for the stakeholders and a retreat to compile the final documents (see financial report). The researchers therefore made four (4) visits to the field instead of the five (5) that were initially planned for.

Fifth, there was unfriendly terrain in the field especially during the rainy seasons. Pools of water and muddy terrain made the routes to schools impassable, which sometimes caused delays.

Sixth, the school calendar made it impossible to visit the schools at certain times of the year. For instance, visitors are not allowed in schools in the third term, especially between the months of October and December, because these are the months when the National Examination is administered. Therefore, the visits had to be fixed within the earlier months in the year. There was also a concern of shifting term dates of school calendar, where sometimes schools proceeded on midterm breaks which made the researchers to shift their visit to other appropriate dates.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings the research draws the following conclusions:

1. Teachers do not have to understand the learners' home language to make use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach in class.
2. The Translanguaging Instructional Approach is an innovation that has the potential to revolutionise learners reading abilities in multilingual contexts, therefore unlocking learners' learning potential in the circumstances of uncertainties like the refugee context.
3. Learners were engaged in co-creating meaning of the reading comprehension text through utilisation of their full linguistic repertoire which reduces frustrations and demotivation that may come with in reading texts written in English as a foreign language.
4. Translanguaging gave learners freedom to use their mother tongue thus making the lessons livelier, relaxing the learning process, which in turn made lessons enjoyable and ensured that learners were engaged more, therefore raising the learners' confidence in classroom interaction.
5. Advocating for the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Approach in multilingual classrooms has potential to improve performance and therefore literacy levels in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for this study are the researchers' propositions based on the findings, coupled with the interactions with the stakeholders during the validation of the findings. The researchers engaged the stakeholders in a one-day meeting to share the findings of the pilot study. These stakeholders included, the teachers who utilized the Translanguaging Instructional Module, the teachers from the control schools, Head teachers from the four sampled schools, the Sub County Director of Education, the Director Teachers Service Commission, the Curriculum support officer and one officer from the county office who was in attendance.

Based on the findings from the pilot study the following are the recommendations:

1. The Translanguaging Instructional Approach should be considered for adoption for its ability to unlock learners' learning potential in multilingual classroom contexts. This may require a policy review.
2. Governments or NGOs looking to improve literacy among displaced or marginalized children should accommodate home languages in early grades to reduce trauma of exclusion in the classrooms, especially in refugee contexts.

3. Director of policies in the Ministry of Education to issue a statement paper on Translanguaging and subsequently, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), and the Ministry of Education to embrace Translanguaging when developing curriculum design and develop resources for Translanguaging, especially for use in lower classes.
4. The Translanguaging Instructional Approach should be introduced to teachers in training colleges so that as they graduate they are equipped with methods to apply approach during the teaching/learning process.
5. Publishing texts in different language contexts can help in boosting the Translanguaging aspects because pupils will have the opportunity to access concepts in both English and their mother tongue.

Meeting with Stakeholders on
17th March 2026 in Tarach
Secondary School in Kakuma



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