ENHANCING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY THROUGH TRANSLANGUAGING AND LANGUAGE APTITUDE IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Hidayati[1], Hidayati[2], Putri Yulianti[3], Nadya Hayatul[4], Elsa Khusnul[5], M Nabil Hummam[6]

[1]Education Programme, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia

[2,3,4,5]English Department/Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia

[6]Mining Department/Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia

hidayatinail73@gmail.com

Abstract: As a pedagogical approach, translanguaging allows learners who are bilingual to make sense of their entire linguistic repertoire to improve academic performance and create meaning. Meanwhile, language learning aptitude is the capacity for thinking to pick up foreign language skills more quickly. In the framework of differentiated instruction in junior high schools, this study attempts to examine the concurrent effects of translanguaging practices and language learning aptitude on students' speaking proficiency. 60 eighth-grade students from three SMP Penggerak in Lombok, Indonesia, were chosen through stratified random sampling as part of the study's quantitative methodology. A speaking proficiency rubric and a validated questionnaire on translanguaging techniques and aptitude scales were used to gather data. Speaking proficiency is significantly and favourably influenced by both translanguaging and language learning ability, as shown by the statistical analysis using multiple linear regression ($p < 0.05$). 62% of the variation in students' speaking performance was explained by the simultaneous contribution of both variables. These results underline the significance of acknowledging individual differences in aptitude to maximise oral communication outcomes and support the incorporation of translanguaging strategies in speaking activities. It is determined that different types of instruction can greatly improve students' English speaking abilities when they are in line with their linguistic and cognitive profiles. It is advised that teachers use flexible language and create a variety of learning pathways based on the aptitude levels of their students to explore the interactions between these variables over more extended periods and in different classroom environments.

Keywords: Speaking Profiency. Translanguaging, Language Aptitude, Junior High School Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging, as a pedagogical strategy, has garnered significant attention in recent years for its role in enhancing bilingual students' language performance. It allows learners to utilize their full linguistic repertoire for deeper comprehension and communication. García and Wei (2014) posit that translanguaging promotes dynamic bilingualism, enabling learners to shift fluidly between languages. Recent studies affirm this, indicating that translanguaging enhances classroom engagement and linguistic confidence (Antony, Ramnath, & Ellikkal, 2024; Nie et al., 2022).

Language learning aptitude refers to the cognitive capacity of an individual to acquire a second language more efficiently. This concept includes phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and memory (Turker et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2022). According to Pishghadam, Khajavy, and Mortazavi (2023), aptitude is influenced by affective and sociocultural factors,

making it not only innate but also developmental. These insights shift the perspective from aptitude as fixed to a more dynamic, contextual view.

Empirical research has increasingly supported translanguaging as a method to improve speaking proficiency. Tran et al. (2021) found that translanguaging practices in Vietnamese EFL classrooms significantly improved learners' oral fluency and confidence. Nie et al. (2022) observed that bilingual collaboration through translanguaging promoted more complex spoken output. Antony, Ramnath, and Ellikkal (2024) reported enhanced motivation and identity expression among Indian students who engaged in translanguaging tasks.

In parallel, the role of aptitude in L2 speaking performance has been well-documented. Turker et al. (2021) demonstrated that neurocognitive aptitude is a strong predictor of pronunciation and oral accuracy. Huang et al. (2022) revealed a strong correlation between learners' aptitude scores and their progress in spoken tasks. Pishghadam et al. (2023) emphasized that learners with higher emotional and sociocultural adaptability exhibited superior speaking outcomes due to enhanced language awareness. Despite the growing literature on translanguaging and aptitude individually, there remains a scarcity of studies examining the two constructs simultaneously. Tran et al. (2021) and Antony et al. (2024) investigated translanguaging, while Turker et al. (2021) and Huang et al. (2022) explored aptitude, yet few studies have quantitatively measured their combined effect on speaking proficiency in a bilingual context. This gap signals an opportunity for a more integrated understanding of how cognitive and pedagogical variables interact.

From the aforementioned studies, it is evident that translanguaging boosts learners' communicative competence by validating their linguistic resources, while aptitude provides the underlying cognitive structure necessary for language acquisition. However, the potential interplay between both remains underexplored, particularly in bilingual secondary school settings where both external strategies and internal capacities shape speaking performance. This study seeks to fill that void by proposing a quantitative model that links both variables to measurable speaking outcomes. This research lies in its integrative approach, analyzing the dual influence of pedagogical strategy and learner disposition on bilingual speaking performance.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of translanguaging frequency and language learning aptitude on the speaking proficiency of bilingual secondary school students. The expected outcomes include improved understanding of how to tailor language instruction to accommodate diverse learner profiles. Practical implications involve developing differentiated teaching strategies that align with learners' cognitive abilities and linguistic resources.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the influence of translanguaging and language learning aptitude on the speaking proficiency of bilingual junior high school students. Quantitative research is appropriate for exploring relationships between measurable variables and testing hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Correlational designs allow researchers to investigate the degree of association among variables without manipulating them (Ary et al., 2019).

The target population in this study consisted of bilingual students from three junior high schools in Sekolah Penggerak, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 students whose teachers had

identified as possessing bilingual proficiency (Bahasa Indonesia and English). These students actively engaged in English-speaking classroom environments and had previous exposure to translanguaging strategies. Ethical clearance and informed consent were obtained before data collection.

2.1 Research Instruments

Three research instruments were utilized in this study:

a. Translanguaging Questionnaire: Adapted from Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2015), measuring students' frequency and perception of translanguaging practices during English speaking tasks. It consists of 15 Likert-scale items (1 = never to 5 = always).
b. Language Learning Aptitude Test: Adapted from the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), consisting of subtests that assess phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, and inductive language learning ability (Skehan, 2015).
c. Speaking Proficiency Test: Based on the Prediction Test, with rubrics assessing fluency, accuracy, vocabulary use, and pronunciation. Students performed a monologue and dialogue task, recorded and rated by two certified English instructors.

2.2 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using a combination of self-report instruments and performance-based assessments. The translanguaging questionnaire and aptitude test were administered in a paper-based format, while speaking tests were recorded for analysis. The researcher ensured test conditions were standardized and supportive for all students in the population and samples.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the predictive power of translanguaging and language aptitude on speaking proficiency. Prior to regression, classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were conducted (Field, 2018). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Descriptive statistics were also reported to describe central tendencies and variability of scores.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive analysis was conducted on the three research variables: Translanguaging, Language Learning Aptitude, and Speaking Proficiency. The statistical summaries are presented below:

Variable	Mean	StD	Minimum	Maximum
Translanguaging	3.85	0.52	2.60	4.80
Language Learning Aptitude	4.12	0.47	3.20	4.90
Speaking Proficiency	3.98	0.55	2.90	4.70

The data shows that students had high Language Learning Aptitude (M = 4.12), followed by Speaking Proficiency (M = 3.98), and Translanguaging usage (M = 3.85). The standard deviations suggest moderate variability among the student responses.

3.1 Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the data. The results are shown below:

Variable	W Statistic	p-value
Translanguaging	0.976	0.183
Language Learning Aptitude	0.981	0.274
Speaking Proficiency	0.968	0.091

Since all p-values > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data for each variable is normally distributed and suitable for parametric testing (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965).

3.2 Correlation Matrix

A heatmap correlation analysis revealed the following relationships:

a. A moderate positive correlation between Translanguaging and Speaking Proficiency (r = 0.48)
b. A strong positive correlation between Language Learning Aptitude and Speaking Proficiency (r = 0.61)
c. A weak to moderate correlation between Translanguaging and Language Learning Aptitude (r = 0.37)

These correlations indicate that both independent variables are positively associated with the dependent variable, supporting further inferential analysis.

3.3 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was conducted to determine the extent to which Translanguaging (X_1) and Language Learning Aptitude (X_2) predicted Speaking Proficiency (Y).

The regression equation was: $Y = 0.331 + 0.412(X_1) + 0.538(X_2)$

The results of the regression analysis are as follows:

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Translanguaging (X_1)	0.412	3.28	0.0018
Language Learning Aptitude(X_2)	0.538	4.79	<0.001
Constant	0.331	1.97	0.054

a. $R^2 = 0.56$ → The model explains 56% of the variance in Speaking Proficiency.
b. Both predictors were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

This confirms that both Translanguaging and Language Learning Aptitude significantly contribute to improving students' speaking performance.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The Effect of Translanguaging on Speaking Proficiency

The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicate that translanguaging has a positive and significant influence on students' speaking proficiency. The regression coefficient (β) was found to be 0.412 with a significance value of $p < 0.01$, suggesting that increased use of translanguaging practices in the classroom correlates with better speaking performance. The strength of the correlation was moderate but consistent across various speaking task contexts.

These findings align with the theory of translanguaging, which promotes cognitive flexibility and deeper understanding in multilingual learners (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging enables students to access conceptual knowledge using their full linguistic repertoire, which in turn facilitates fluency and confidence in producing spoken language. The statistical analysis confirms that translanguaging has a significant positive effect on students' speaking proficiency. This aligns with the findings of García and Wei (2014), who stated that translanguaging fosters a more inclusive language environment that validates students' multilingual backgrounds. It allows learners to utilize all their linguistic resources when processing and producing language, leading to better performance in spoken tasks.

Research by Cenoz and Gorter (2020) also supports this, noting that translanguaging strategies reduce cognitive overload by enabling flexible switching between languages. Consequently, students feel more confident and express themselves with greater fluency and accuracy. These findings affirm the role of translanguaging not merely as a compensatory tool but as an empowering pedagogical practice in bilingual education contexts.

4.2 The Effect of Language Learning Aptitude on Speaking Proficiency

The statistical analysis of language learning aptitude reveals a significant relationship with students' speaking proficiency. The regression coefficient (β) was 0.538, and the significance level was $p < 0.001$, indicating a strong positive impact of aptitude on speaking performance. Students with higher aptitude scores demonstrated better articulation, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy.

Specifically, subcomponents of aptitude such as phonemic coding ability and grammatical sensitivity were highly associated with oral fluency. These results corroborate earlier studies highlighting the critical role of innate cognitive capacities in successful language production (Dörnyei, 2014; Robinson, 2013). Language learning aptitude emerged as the stronger predictor in this study. Students with higher aptitude scores demonstrated better speaking proficiency. This finding resonates with earlier work by Skehan (2016), who emphasized that aptitude significantly influences how well learners internalize phonological and syntactic patterns of a second language.

In a study by Li (2015), aptitude accounted for a considerable portion of the variance in productive language skills, particularly speaking. Learners who exhibit better working memory, grammatical sensitivity, and phonemic coding ability tend to outperform others in oral fluency and lexical choice. Thus, speaking ability is not only a matter of exposure and practice but also significantly shaped by inherent learning capabilities.

4.3 Combined Effects and Pedagogical Implications

The results from multiple regression analysis revealed that both translanguaging and language learning aptitude contribute significantly to speaking proficiency when analyzed together. The multiple R^2 value was 0.56, meaning that 56% of the variance in speaking performance can be explained by the two predictors. The model was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming its predictive validity.

When translanguaging and aptitude are considered simultaneously, their combined effect on speaking proficiency is both statistically significant and educationally meaningful. These findings emphasize the need for differentiated instruction in speaking tasks, especially in bilingual or multilingual classrooms. As Tomlinson and Moon (2013) have noted, differentiated strategies allow students with varying aptitude levels to engage meaningfully with language tasks.

Pedagogically, this study suggests that teachers should incorporate translanguaging scaffolds while also designing instruction that taps into individual aptitude strengths. For instance, visual organizers and translanguaging spaces can benefit students with lower aptitude, while challenging real-life speaking simulations can stretch high-aptitude learners further. This finding suggests a complementary relationship between strategy-based instruction (translanguaging) and cognitive-based factors (aptitude). In pedagogical contexts, this implies that differentiated instruction should account for both learner variability in cognitive capacities and the sociolinguistic resources available to them. Teachers in multilingual classrooms should consider integrating translanguaging as a scaffold, especially for students with varying levels of language aptitude.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of statistical analyses and discussion in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn that translanguaging has a significant and positive effect on students' speaking proficiency. The use of translanguaging strategies allows learners to access prior linguistic knowledge, reduce affective barriers, and facilitate meaning-making in second language production. For Language Learning Aptitude also significantly influences students' speaking proficiency. Learners with higher aptitude tend to demonstrate faster processing of phonological and syntactic structures, more accurate pronunciation, and greater fluency. Simultaneously, Translanguaging and Language Learning Aptitude contribute significantly to improving students' speaking proficiency. Their combined effects account for a substantial proportion of variance in the development of oral communication skills. These findings highlight the multifactorial nature of L2 speaking development, where both sociocultural practices and individual learner differences are pivotal.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the conclusions above, the following pedagogical and research-based recommendations are proposed:

a. For English teachers: It is recommended to strategically incorporate translanguaging in speaking activities, such as bilingual group discussions, code-switching moments in storytelling, and reflection journals in the L1 to scaffold learning, especially in linguistically diverse classrooms. This practice should not be seen as a deficit, but rather as a dynamic resource.
b. For curriculum developers: Educational materials and policies should acknowledge the role of learner aptitude and provide adaptive learning pathways. Differentiated instruction frameworks can be aligned with aptitude levels, allowing students to engage in speaking tasks that match their cognitive readiness and motivation.
c. For future researchers: It is suggested to explore other affective and cognitive variables that may interact with translanguaging and aptitude, such as self-efficacy, working memory, or anxiety. Moreover, employing mixed-method approaches may enrich the understanding of how these variables operate in real classroom interactions.
d. For school administrators: Professional development programs should include training on translanguaging pedagogy and learner profiling. Teachers should be supported in designing instruction that leverages students' full linguistic repertoires and cognitive strengths.

REFERENCES

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Irvine, C. K. S., & Walker, D. (2019). *Introduction to research in education* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications. Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications

Cummins, J. (2017). *Teaching for Transfer: Challenging the Two Solitudes Assumption in Bilingual Education*. In O. García, A. M. Y. Lin, & S. May (Eds.), *Bilingual and Multilingual Education* (pp. 103–115). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1_8

Dewaele, J. M., & Wei, L. (2014). Attitudes towards code-switching among adults and children in bilingual families. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35(3), 235–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.858175

Dörnyei, Z. (2014). *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Routledge.

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765

Kiss, C., & Nikolov, M. (2019). The role of aptitude in young learners' foreign language learning. *Language Learning*, 69(S1), 169–194. https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12327

Li, S. (2015). The associations between language aptitude and second language grammar acquisition: A meta-analytic review of five decades of research. *Applied Linguistics*, 36(3), 385–408. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu054

Mazak, C. M., & Herbas-Donoso, C. (2015). Translanguaging practices at a bilingual university: A case study of a science classroom. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 18(6), 698–714. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2014.939138

Ortega, L. (2020). *The role of implicit and explicit knowledge in L2 speaking performance*. In E. Winke & G. Brunfaut (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Technology* (pp. 349–364). Routledge.

Sayer, P. (2018). Translingual practices and neoliberal policies: Attending to the situated nature of language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(2), 438–449. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.405

Skehan, P. (2015). Cognitive dimensions of language aptitude. *Language Learning*, 65(1), 156–182. https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12072

Sparks, R., & Patton, J. (2016). Examining the underlying structure of language aptitude and its relationship to second language proficiency in adolescents. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 45, 89–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2015.12.003

Tsui, A. B. M., & Tollefson, J. W. (Eds.). (2017). *Language Policy, Culture, and Identity in Asian Contexts*. Routledge.

Winke, P. M. (2019). Language aptitude. In J. Liontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (pp. 1–7). Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0184

Yilmaz, G., & Bayyurt, Y. (2020). Perspectives of pre-service teachers on translanguaging in English language classrooms. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 17(4), 448–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2018.1465116

Zoghi, M., & Razmjoo, S. A. (2019). The relationship between L2 learners' language learning aptitude and their speaking performance: A correlational study. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 394–403. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1002.29