Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics
ISSN: 2345-3303 – E-ISSN: 2588-3887 – https://rals.scu.ac.ir
Published by Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Please cite this paper as follows:
Di Sarno-García, S., & Gimeno-Sanz, A. (2026). The pragmatic function of translanguaging in a bilingual telecollaboration project. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, *17*(1), 123-136. https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2025.48683.3446

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz



Research Paper

The Pragmatic Function of Translanguaging in a Bilingual Telecollaboration Project

Sofia Di Sarno-García[1] & Ana Gimeno-Sanz[2]

[1]Corresponding author, Department of Linguistics Applied to Science and Technology, Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería y Sistemas de Telecomunicación, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Madrid, Spain; *s.disarno@upm.es*
[2]Department of Applied Linguistics, Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería Aeroespacial y Diseño Industrial, Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain; *agimeno@upvnet.upv.es*

Received: 07/01/2025 Accepted: 05/06/2025

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the discourse produced by participants of a bilingual telecollaboration project and its pragmatic implications. Based on Picoli and Salomão's (2020) 'principle of equality', instances of translanguaging were sought and analysed. The participants in the telecollaboration project were a group of seven Spanish-speaking students of English and a group of seven English-speaking students of Spanish who engaged in synchronous Zoom sessions for six weeks. Learners were expected to perform a role-play per week, after which they were given free time to practise oral conversation in both English and Spanish. Data were gathered from the transcription of the oral conversations. A total number of 23 conversations were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. After categorising all the usage instances, the results revealed that students mostly used translanguaging for "clarification", followed by "last language used", "accommodation", "sequential subordination", and "solidarity". There was evidence that translanguaging was used as a pragmatic strategy to support communication and avoid breakdowns in bilingual or multilingual interactions.

***Keywords*:** L2 Pragmatics; Intercultural Speaker; Multilingualism; Telecollaboration.

1. Introduction

Despite the wealth of studies dealing with code-switching and translanguaging, these practices have often been regarded as a sign of lack of competence in the second/foreign language (L2) or a negative transfer from the first language (L1). This is also the case when dealing with pragmatic transfer (González-Lloret, 2021). Despite this, Nightingale and Safont (2019) suggested that translingual practices in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) are an "under-researched area of multilingual pragmatics" (p. 189). This is particularly the case in telecollaboration, where the pragmatic function of translanguaging and code-switching has not, to our knowledge, been analysed. For this reason, this study intends to cover a relevant gap in existing literature. In line with this, Androutsopoulos (2013) identified the potential relevance of code-switching in CMC in terms of pragmatics, but she also acknowledged that the field was under-investigated. In fact, Androutsopoulos (2013) claimed that code-switching in CMC "is relevant not only because it is there (and not yet well understood) but also for the insights it can offer to pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse studies" (p. 1).

Following a socio-pragmatic approach, Picoli and Salomão's (2020) renamed Vassallo and Telles' (2006) principle of separation (of languages) as principle of equality, thus paving the way for the accepted coexistence of two or more languages within a telecollaborative environment, rather than seeing it as an error. As argued by Salomão and Viana da Silva (2023), "code switching can be a relevant resource for participants, and it reflects the actual use of languages they make in teletandem sessions" (p. 184). Accordingly, Vassallo and Telles (2006) also acknowledged that when using their L1 in a telecollaboration project (or teletandem, which is the term employed by the authors), learners may wish to achieve specific communicative goals (p. 87). Despite this, they advocated for a separate use of languages at different

times during the exchange. Understanding the pragmatic implications of translanguaging is, therefore, crucial to helping learners communicate effectively. In line with this, studies such as those conducted by Zorina and Pomortseva (2023) suggest that despite their linguistic proficiency, students still find difficulties in being effective communicators, a fact directly related to their pragmatic competence.

In response to the call for further research in multilingual pragmatics in CMC made by Nightingale and Safont (2019), and taking Picoli and Salomão's (2020) principle of equality as a starting point, the study presented here intends to contribute to the field of translanguaging and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) by analysing the synchronous oral interactions within a bilateral bilingual telecollaboration project. The lack of research on the pragmatic functions of translanguaging in synchronous bilingual telecollaborative contexts limits our understanding of how learners use their full linguistic repertoire to communicate effectively. This study thus aims to fill this gap by offering empirical evidence on the pragmatic value of translanguaging, which is crucial to developing learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The purpose, therefore, is to explore any possible pragmatic function arising from translanguaging during the telecollaborative exchanges. To this end, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Do the instances of translanguaging in synchronous oral interactions entail a pragmatic function? If so, which one(s)?

2. Do all students make similar use of translanguaging during the oral and synchronous interactions? If so, why, or if not, why not?

For the purpose of this study, we shall refer to translanguaging as "the fluid use of multiple linguistic and semiotic resources as a single repertoire" (Clavijo Olarte, 2023, p. 264). This term is preferred over code-switching as the literature in the field (e.g., Otheguy et al., 2015) suggests that code-switching may not be comprehensive enough as it does not take into account plurilingual speakers' linguistic repertoire "as integrated and independent of state-endorsed discrete or named languages" (Canals, 2022, p. 3). The main difference between the two terms lies in the understanding of languages, which in the case of code-switching are seen as separate from one another, while translanguaging understands the continuum in bi/multilingual speakers' linguistic repertoire. This idea was previously introduced by García and Wei (2014), who see translanguaging as:

An approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages. (p. 2)

Observing translanguaging through the lens of foreign language teaching, the literature review explores translanguaging practices within telecollaboration and from a pragmatic perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Translanguaging in Telecollaboration

Different terms are currently being used to refer to a very similar concept where language learners engage in meaningful intercultural encounters. The most commonly used terms include Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (Rubin, 2016), Virtual Exchange (VE) (Helm, 2018; O'Dowd, 2018), Teletandem (Leone & Telles, 2016), and Telecollaboration (Belz, 2003). Although sometimes used interchangeably, these terms may reflect different practices or conceptualisations. The authors of this paper use the term Telecollaboration because, as Dooly and Smith (2020), and Sadler and Dooly (2022) suggest, it is composed of the prefix 'tele' which implies distance, and the word 'collaboration', while 'exchange' (as in virtual exchange) does not "always capture that inherent quality of mutually supported learning and sharing" (Dooly & Smith, 2020, p. 64). Colpaert (2020) also vindicates the use of the term Telecollaboration, suggesting that 'virtual' means "less than the real thing" (p. 655). Based on these premises, the authors understand the concept of Telecollaboration as:

> A form of network-based language teaching that focuses on the pedagogic practice of bringing together classes of foreign language learners through computer-mediated communication for the purpose of improving their language skills, intercultural communicative competence, and digital literacies. It is recognized as a subfield within computer-assisted language learning as it relates to the use of technology in language learning (Gimeno-Sanz, 2026).

Telecollaborative environments, by nature, foster bilingual or multilingual interactions, although some formats rely on a lingua franca (e.g., Chen et al., 2025). These practices offer learners authentic opportunities to develop pragmatic competence (Sykes, 2017; González-Lloret, 2019) since the sociocultural grounding of the interactions supports the use of real discourse patterns and allows learners to explore interlanguage pragmatics. As pointed out by Sykes (2018), "the use of telecollaboration to address ILP [interlanguage pragmatics] development enables learners themselves to tackle pragmatic issues both as tasks and topics, but also as a function of their interactions with their peers around other tasks" (p. 127). Thus, it follows that, thanks to telecollaboration, students have the opportunity to practise different pragmatic functions in authentic interactions. In line with this, Alonso-Belmonte and Vinagre (2017) reflected on how the goal of telecollaboration is not to achieve a native speaker-like competence in the L2, but rather to observe the intercultural speaker's norms (following Byram's 1997 and 2021 definition of intercultural speaker). Therefore, the use of different languages within the same discourse exchange can be framed within this paradigm shift. In fact, Byram (2021) himself includes plurilingualism and translanguaging practices within one of the components of his model of ICC, that is, knowledge of interaction (pp. 46-47). Furthermore, authors such as Cots and Llurda (2014) highlight the increasing need to rethink universities' language policies to include English, while Liyanage and Tao (2020) acknowledge the increasing need to regulate multilingualism in educational policies and, thus, adopt multilingual pedagogies. This is particularly relevant in today's interconnected and globalised society, as contact with speakers of different languages and cultures is likely to occur in our everyday lives. Owing to this, bi-/multilingual practices should be introduced in the foreign language classroom as opposed to traditional practices where "students are taught a standardized linguistic system with which they are expected to approximate a native speaker and reader" (Kramsch, 2012, p. 9).

This view aligns with Hauck's (2023) model of critical virtual exchange (CVE), which integrates translanguaging "as a defining element of CVE, particularly but not exclusively in exchanges where the learning and teaching of languages and cultures is the focal point" (p. 9). In doing so, Hauck tries to overcome the hegemony of the English language. Despite this, Ortega (2017) argues that, so far, most CALL studies still perpetuate the monolingual perspective, seeing students as L1 speakers of one language and L2 speakers of a different language attempting to achieve native-like proficiency. She also suggests that most of the CALL research still operates under the assumption that the best model to learn a language is a native speaker. From a pedagogical perspective, Chapelle (2003) and later Taguchi (2018) highlight the potential of computer-assisted environments to support the development of L2 pragmatics by creating authentic interactional opportunities where learners can practise meaning negotiation strategies. In fact, Androutsopoulos (2013) suggested that analysing translanguaging and code-switching practices in CMC "challenges fundamental assumptions in CMC studies" (p. 1). Despite not adopting a strictly linguistic or pragmatic perspective, studies such as Hildeblando Júnior (2023) explore the impact of virtual exchange to decolonise English language teaching and abandon the 'native-speakerism' ideology. In addition, Huang (2024) challenged Chinese learners' monolingual and monocultural perspectives in a CVE setting by adopting a translanguaging approach. The results showed that translanguaging fostered intercultural learning negotiation as its functions were to negotiate meaning, manage interaction, culture illustration, and react to cultural topics. Satar et al. (2024) also called upon Vassallo and Telles' (2006) principle of separation of languages through a teletandem experience with low proficiency level students. Their findings demonstrated the inadequacy of the above-mentioned principle, so they reframed it as the translanguaging principle, arguing that translanguaging should be seen as co-learning since participants in a teletandem encounter can play both the roles of expert and learner to take full advantage of multilingual interactions. Calling upon Picoli and Salomão (2020) and Satar et al.'s (2024) findings, Oliveira (2024) analysed the use of Spanish in bi-/multilingual tandem sessions also involving the use of Portuguese and English. Her results suggested that the use of students' full linguistic repertoires can enhance not only the development of the target language, but also other interactional skills involved in meaning-making. These findings further challenge the traditional separation of languages in telecollaborative environments and support a more flexible, integrated view of multilingual practices in language learning.

As suggested by Martín-Laguna (2022), the study of pragmatics has also traditionally focused on achieving a native-like proficiency, although "in a multilingual context, the line between L1 and L2 speakers is not always clear-cut because people grow up speaking multiple languages simultaneously and they develop a hybrid competence" (Martín-Laguna, 2022, p. 64). Bearing this in mind, the following section explores the role of translanguaging from a pragmatic point of view.

2.2. Translanguaging from a Pragmatic Perspective

Distancing herself from the native/non-native speaker dichotomy, Ishihara (2021) proposes a translingual framework which, in her own words, "allows us to draw on an integrative understanding of the process in which language users create meaning by drawing upon a variety of social, semiotic, pragmatic, and discursive resources from more than one language or language variety" (p. 307). Therefore, she highlights the relationship between pragmatics and translanguaging, which challenges the above-mentioned native-speakerism ideology (Hildeblando Júnior, 2023). Ishihara's (2021) framework adopts a holistic approach by acknowledging that when interacting, bi-/multilingual speakers do not separate languages, but rather integrate them when negotiating meaning, which contributes to the construction of their multiple identities. As argued by the author, "in a translingual framework, nativeness is neither an achievable nor a desirable goal" (Ishihara, 2021, p. 307), which aligns with Alonso-Belmonte and Vinagre's (2017) view regarding the goals of telecollaboration.

As previous research from Nightingale and Safont (2019) suggests, translanguaging may imply more than the "general communicative competence of multilinguals" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 403). Translanguaging practices are a characteristic of multilingual speakers' linguistic repertoire, and thus, it can entail a pragmatic function. This becomes especially relevant in telecollaborative environments, as they involve language learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This view was earlier adopted by Ishihara and Cohen (2014), who saw pragmatic competence as a social phenomenon where speakers of different languages construct their hybrid identities rather than merely a cognitive process (Ishihara, 2021). In a similar vein, Dervin (2016) challenges essentialist views of intercultural communication and proposes a liquid notion of identity that resonates with translanguaging practices by claiming that speakers negotiate not only meaning but also social positions and relational dynamics in real time.

Despite the fact that pragmatic translanguaging (Nightingale & Safont, 2019) is still an under-investigated field in CALL, relevant studies have started to emerge in past years. Ren and Guo (2022), for instance, were pioneers in analysing translanguaging in a particular speech act performed in online settings. To do so, they explored Chinese speakers' self-praise on social media communication. Similarly, Ma and Li (2024) investigated translanguaging practices in the production of refusals on the WeChat social network. Their study identified three different functions of refusals in online settings, namely, redressive strategies, refusals functioning as a marker of mock impoliteness, and "as a facilitator of smooth online communication" (p. 1). These studies offer valuable insights into the field of pragmatic translanguaging in online contexts. However, none of them focuses specifically on telecollaboration projects, as opposed to the two studies mentioned below. Given that Kasper and Rose (2001) defined pragmatic competence as the ability to use language appropriately in context—highlighting the importance of learners developing this skill through interaction with diverse speakers in authentic communicative tasks—telecollaboration emerges as a promising means to support this development.

In their studies, Picoli (2019) and Picoli and Salomão (2020) highlight the significance of translanguaging—or code-switching—in telecollaborative (or teletandem) contexts, arguing that its linguistic complexity and the interplay of internal and external factors must be examined in light of the speaker's underlying motivations. Building on this premise and adopting a socio-pragmatic perspective, they identified distinct pragmatic functions of translanguaging, which serve as the foundation for the present study. These functions, as outlined by Picoli and Salomão (2020), include accommodation, solidarity, clarification, and sequential subordination.

Accommodation is the strategy employed to compensate lack of vocabulary in the speaker's discourse. In other words, when a language learner is using one language but does not know (or does not remember) a given word, s/he uses the other language to fill the gap in his/her discourse. Solidarity, on the other hand, is used to show sympathy for the interlocutor and to "soften messages" (translated from the original) (Picoli, 2019, p. 47). Clarification, as the term suggests, is used to clarify and solve linguistic doubts to avoid communication breakdowns. The last strategy included in Picoli and Salomão's (2020) study is that of sequential subordination, which represents a transition between languages within the same utterance.

To these functions, the authors of this study added two further categories, that of last language used and none. The first strategy is employed when a speaker who was using a particular language switches to the language that his or her interlocutor has used in his/her previous utterance. The function of this strategy is to maintain the flow of the conversation and adapt to the interlocutor's needs, which could relate to classic pragmatic strategies such as positive face

strategies (i.e., the speaker's willingness to be part of the group). On the other hand, the second strategy is used for those instances that do not fall into any of the above-mentioned categories.

Taken together, these theoretical contributions frame translanguaging as a pragmatically rich, identity-forming practice that is particularly relevant in intercultural telecollaboration projects.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed in the study, which was based on a six-week telecollaboration project between a Spanish and an English university. Throughout the project, students engaged in both synchronous and asynchronous activities; however, this study focuses exclusively on the synchronous interactions, as these were less structured than the asynchronous written tasks. Consequently, any instances of translanguaging observed in the synchronous oral exchanges occurred spontaneously.

3.1. Setting and Participants

The participants consisted of seven Spanish-speaking students from the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain) and seven English-speaking students from the University of Bath (UK). In terms of gender, six were females and eight were males. They were between 18 and 28 years of age, except for one student who was over the age of 60.

The Spanish participants were third year students of Aerospace Engineering, enrolled on an optional B2 level (CEFRL) English course totalling 4.5 European credits, while learners from Bath were studying various degrees (e.g., Business, Management, etc.) and were taking an optional B1 level (CEFRL) Spanish course which was not part of their degree.

Because Valencia has two official languages—Spanish and Valencian—the majority of the participants were from bilingual backgrounds. Additionally, a number of Bath students were originally from France, Hungary, and Italy, yet they were all highly proficient English speakers. Consequently, they were all L1 speakers of the language used in their home countries.

3.2. Instruments and Procedures

Learners were expected to carry out six weekly videoconference sessions through Zoom, although some of them completed fewer than six. To do so, they were arranged in pairs after completing a pairing questionnaire so as to match them with somebody with whom they shared interests.

During the synchronous Zoom sessions, the learners had to carry out two different role-plays to elicit their use of the speech act of apologies. One was in English, while the other was in Spanish. After this, students were given free time to practise oral conversation. Although it was not compulsory, they were all provided with a list of suggested discussion topics.

3.3. Data Gathering Procedures

Data were collected from the transcriptions of the synchronous Zoom sessions, which were generated with the aid of MediaUPV (https://media.upv.es/). This tool allows users to generate automatic subtitles which can be edited. As this study stems from a larger project, only the role-plays and the cultural discussions were transcribed. Specifically, for the purpose of this study, only the cultural and spontaneous discussions were analysed since learners were requested to use both languages, Spanish and English, in the role-plays.

Instances of translanguaging were then sought and categorised following a taxonomy based on Picoli and Salomão's (2020) study (see Table 1). However, two extra categories were added (i.e., "last language used" and "none", which was used when translanguaging did not seem to imply any pragmatic function). In addition, the authors of this study categorised the examples of translanguaging in both directions (i.e., from L1 to L2 and vice versa).

Following the categorisation of the data, instances were manually counted, enabling a quantitative content analysis in which qualitative data were transformed into quantitative form to examine the frequency of each pragmatic function and provide a broader analytical perspective. Descriptive statistics were then calculated using PSPP[1] software.

In addition, a qualitative analysis of the transcriptions was conducted to gain deeper insights into the instances of translanguaging.

4. Results

The quantitative content analysis revealed that 405 instances of translanguaging took place during 45 sessions. Of these, 49.38% (n=200) were from L1 to L2, and 50.62% (n=205) were from L2 to L1. The small difference in directionality suggests that students used different strategies in a balanced way regardless of the language they were using. Regarding their pragmatic function, most of them (n=125) were examples of clarification, followed by last language used (n=100), accommodation (n=83), sequential subordination (n=56), none (n=35), and solidarity (n=6). Table 1 summarises the main findings and reports some examples from each category. S here stands for student.

Table 1. *Translanguaging Categorisation and Descriptive Statistics*

Pragmatic Function	N	%	Mean	Standard Deviation	Example*
Accommodation	83	20.49	5.93	7.71	(1) Pero yo creo que el portugués es más como el francés no? como like sounds wise.
Solidarity	6	1.48	.46	.52	(2) S1: Thank you, thank you a lot (laughter) Well that's nice you have you have done a perfect um a perfect representation of our teachers S2: (laughter) Yeah es porque ehm he ocu- ocurrado? ocurando? Ocurrido! S1: Ocurrido el qué? Te ha ocurrido?
Clarification	125	30.87	8.93	7.59	(3) S1: Um Christmas time to be with family, um you know we get together yeah spend time together we have um a meal on Christmas day with turkey. S2: With? S1: Turkey? Um let me think...turkey no sé en español es un um [...] S1: Yes. Ehm el pavo (laughter) turkey es el pavo (laughter)
Sequential subordination	56	13.83	4.00	8.57	(4) Oh I love marisco so good
Last language used	100	24.69	7.14	9.16	(5) S1: It's like a small, a small yeah meal like just sandwich or something a bocadillo. S2: For example in dentro de una hora dentro de una hora ehm podría ser la hora de la merienda S1: Yeah entonces yo creo que ehm...

None	35	8.64	2.50	2.18	(6) S1: Depende a ver si calculo que a las once he acaba- ya he acabado de cenar y todo ehm sobre las doce creo S2: Wow las once pues S1: (overlapping) Well, um, yesterday we, we were playing parchís um until half past twelve here in the, in my, in my house and I lose. I lost.

* Examples have not been translated into English since this would imply losing translanguaging practices.

The fact that "clarification" is the most common strategy suggests that learners were eager to help their partners understand and, vice versa, that most of them were willing to maintain the flow of the conversation and, thus, negotiate meaning whenever needed. "Last language used" is the second most frequent category, which seems to reveal students' willingness to adapt to their international partners' discourse. Instead of keeping the language they were using, they adapted to the code their counterparts employed in the immediately preceding exchange. This might imply that they tried to make their partners feel at ease during the conversation. Despite this, "solidarity" was the category with the least frequency, which may indicate that interactions tended to be functional rather than emotional. "Sequential subordination" was the fourth category of translanguaging. As can be observed in excerpt 4 above, it differs from "accommodation" in that the speaker is using the Spanish word "marisco" (i.e., seafood) although her L1s are English and Italian. Therefore, this transition between languages is not due to a lack of proficiency in her L2. The results demonstrate that, on some occasions, switching between languages might not entail a specific pragmatic function, as can be observed from excerpt 6 above. The student (S1) is using Spanish, and her counterpart (S2) replies in Spanish, but then she (S1) suddenly starts speaking in English. Apparently, there was no pragmatic reason to switch from Spanish to English at that precise moment. Except for "solidarity", which is the least frequent strategy, the high standard deviation (SD) of the other strategies indicates a great variability in their usage, as some students might have used this strategy frequently, while others did not. This can suggest a disparity in pragmatic translanguaging strategy use, which is especially the case in sequential subordination, as the SD is higher than that of clarification despite there being less than half of its instances.

The findings also reveal that some of the students tended to switch between languages much more often than others. This was the case of an Italian student from the University of Bath who changed from English to Spanish 28 times and from Spanish to English 29 times in the same Zoom session, which lasted for 55 minutes. Some instances also showed that she used some Italian words during the exchanges. Excerpts 7 and 8 below illustrate this phenomenon.

(7)

S1: (overlapping) how do you say accent?

S2: Accent sí acento.

S3: Oh acento perfetto (laughter) acento.

(8)

S1. No que mi mi mello- mejor amiga es venezuelana y cuando le pido de ayudarme a hacer los deberes de español que ehm sometimes

S2: A veces.

S1: A veces ehm oh escribe palabras en manera diferente que Ana nuestra profesora que es española las escribe. Y boh (laughter) strano.

Another student changed from English to Spanish 11 times and from Spanish to English 12 times in one session, which lasted 48 minutes. This is interesting to note as both this student and the above-mentioned learner have a different L1 to English, that is, Hungarian. Therefore, it follows that the students who were multilingual and intercultural speakers, as opposed to those who were bilingual and who lived in the same country they were born and raised in, tended to use translanguaging more often. Excerpt 9 below is a representation of this, although the student did not incorporate Hungarian into his speech. As can be seen, S2 uses sequential subordination to mention a typical dish from the UK, i.e.,

fish and chips, and S1 uses English instead of Spanish like he did in his previous utterance (i.e., S1 uses "last language used"). S1 goes on translating 'big burgers' into Spanish, although this does not seem to have a pragmatic function, while S2 employs "last language used" and "clarification" to ask how to say 'very common' in Spanish, which is his L2.

(9)

S1: (overlapping) Por ejemplo qué cuáles son los platos típicos allí?

S2: Yo mmh ok creo que- conoces fish and chips? (laughter) como

S1: It is the only dish that I know (laughter)

S2: Yeah it's a typical one but they also love to eat like big burgers you with like but

S1: Big burgers or sí hamburguesas grandes is something from from the United States than

S2: Sí sí estoy de acuerdo pero también aquí es bastante sabes como ehm how do you say is very common?

S1: Eh común sí algo común expandido extendido

S2: Sí expandido muy expandido eh entonces sí yo creo que la ge- las pers- la gente aquí come también bastante ehm bastante eh qué es la palabra ehm in insalo insanamente?

Similar results were obtained by a third student who was a bilingual speaker of Spanish and Valencian, and who was learning English as a foreign language. In this case, she changed from Spanish to English 8 times and from English to Spanish 7 times in one session. In this case, it lasted 52 minutes. Lastly, a Scottish student changed from English to Spanish 11 times, and from Spanish to English 9 times in a Zoom session lasting 26 minutes. However, they only used Spanish and English in their exchanges, as opposed to the Italian student who also incorporated Italian in her discourse.

5. Discussion

In response to RQ1: *Do the instances of translanguaging in the oral and synchronous interactions entail a pragmatic function? If so, which ones?,* the quantitative content analysis showed that learners' discourse involved several pragmatic functions based on the taxonomy used, with "clarification" emerging as the most common. Furthermore, it seems that both languages (i.e., Spanish and English) were equally used, thus confirming the principle of equality. As previously mentioned, the taxonomy employed was based on that devised by Picoli and Salomão (2020) and their principle of equality, together with that of other authors such as Satar et al. (2024), who rejected the principle of separation of languages in telecollaborative environments, coining this phenomenon as the translanguaging principle.

In their study, Picoli and Salomão (2020) analysed the telecollaborative interaction between three pairs of students. Contrary to the findings obtained in this study, their results revealed that learners made unequal use of the languages involved in their interaction (i.e., Portuguese and English). Differing results were also found in terms of pragmatic function, as the most outstanding reason to use translanguaging was "accommodation", followed by "solidarity", "clarification", and "sequential subordination". Even though Canals (2021) did not use a taxonomy to classify translanguaging episodes, she acknowledged that most of the time it occurred in order to formulate a question, for instance, about the meaning of a lexical item or its pronunciation in the target language (TL). These findings align with those in this study where "clarification" was also the most frequent function used. This prevalence of "clarification" suggests that students not only relied on translanguaging as a compensatory strategy but actively used it to foster mutual understanding and maintain conversational coherence. It highlights learners' agency in managing pragmatic breakdowns by drawing from their full linguistic repertoires. Canals (2023) also reported similar findings, since the most common functions of translanguaging in her study were those relating to "seeking help about language" and "equivalence", which correspond to "clarification" in the present study, as illustrated in excerpts 7 and 9 above.

The fact that the "last language used" and "accommodation" were respectively the second and third most common categories in the study reported here reveals students' willingness to maintain the flow of the conversation and exhibit their whole linguistic repertoire, which implies that they felt at ease using both languages. Similar results were obtained by Satar et al. (2024), as participants in their study also demonstrated the desire to avoid communication breakdowns and create meaning, similarly to Walker (2018) identifying learners' capacity to co-construct meaning when carrying out a collaborative task. In light of this, translanguaging operates not only as a tool for negotiating meaning but

also as a marker of relational awareness and face-work management in intercultural encounters. The fact that "solidarity" was the pragmatic function with the lowest frequency may imply that speakers tended not to rely on their emotions during the interaction. These results differ from those obtained by Rahimi Domakani et al. (2014), as they claimed that "pragmatic development and performance are intricately linked to learner affect, subjectivity, and emotions" (p. 149).

The analysis suggests that some of the identified pragmatic strategies employed by learners could also relate to classic pragmatic strategies. For instance, a relationship between "accommodation" and "positive politeness" might be traced, as this strategy reveals the speaker's intention to foster cooperation with the interlocutor. This also relates to Giles and Ogay's (2007) Communication Accommodation Theory, according to which speakers adapt their discourse to that of their interlocutors. "Solidarity" is also a clear example of positive politeness, as it fosters closeness between speakers. "Clarification", instead, might be related to Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and more specifically to the maxim of manner, which advocates for avoiding ambiguity. In addition, "clarification" was often performed by means of requests, which is a specific speech act. Finally, "last language used" could be an example of negative politeness when it is used to minimise imposition, or pragmatic alignment if the speaker uses the language preferred by the interlocutor.

In response to RQ2: *Do all students make a similar use of translanguaging during the oral and synchronous interactions? If so, why, or if not, why not?*, it was found that some students tended to use translanguaging more often than others and that one student also incorporated a third language, that is, Italian. Similar results were observed by Canals (2021, 2023) as translanguaging involved other languages apart from Spanish and English, namely French and German. However, in her study she did not mention if the students who used a third language were also the ones who used translanguaging more often.

The data collected in this study does not allow us to make general claims, but it seems that those who have a multi- rather than a bi-lingual background or who had lived in different countries were the ones who switched from one language to another more frequently. Back in 2001, Dendrinos already claimed that in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, students should be allowed to move freely from one language to the other, as they will not be monolingual speakers, but rather interpreters or reporters. In a similar vein, Cook (1992) advocated for a fair use of code-switching in foreign language classrooms, which in turn would benefit learners' competence in the L2. This seems to align with Coperías-Aguilar's (2002) definition of the intercultural speaker as someone who

> [...] has the ability to manage communication and interaction between people of different cultural identities and different languages, and he is also able to come out of himself and take another perspective, which will allow him to bring into the interaction different interpretations of reality. (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002, p. 92).

However, to our knowledge, related literature has not so far indicated that multilingual and intercultural speakers tend to use translanguaging more often than bilinguals do. Notwithstanding, previous research by Rahimi Domakani et al. (2013) revealed that bilingualism did not have an effect on learners' pragmatic awareness. Therefore, this study brings a new direction for future research in the field.

Overall, the data indicate that translanguaging practices in synchronous telecollaborative encounters are neither random nor purely compensatory. Rather, they are strategic, functional, and reflective of learners' emerging intercultural identities. Nonetheless, further research is needed to explore how these pragmatic functions evolve over time and whether instructional intervention can enhance learners' awareness and use of such strategies. These findings suggest that foreign language pedagogies should move beyond rigid L1/L2 compartmentalisation and embrace translanguaging as a legitimate communicative strategy. Language teachers may explicitly address pragmatic functions of translanguaging in the classroom to raise learners' metapragmatic awareness and support the development of ICC, as proposed by Byram (1997, 2021).

6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore the pragmatic function of translanguaging in an intercultural bilingual telecollaboration project. To this end, data were collected from synchronous oral interactions between language learners who had different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Spontaneous instances of translanguaging were then coded following a taxonomy based on Picoli and Salomão's design (2020). The results showed that translanguaging entailed different pragmatic functions, the most common being that of "clarification". This seems to suggest the learners' spontaneous ability and willingness to negotiate meaning in order to avoid communication breakdowns caused by

linguistic or cultural misunderstandings. The findings of this study suggest that the boundaries between languages are becoming increasingly fuzzy thanks to students' bi- or multilingual linguistic repertoires. This is in line with one of the components in Byram's (1997, 2021) ICC model, namely, "knowledge of interaction" linked to skills of relating and interpreting and attitudes of openness and curiosity. Therefore, these findings are encouraging, as one of the general aims of any telecollaboration project has traditionally been to develop the learners' ICC (O'Dowd, 2012).

Despite these encouraging results, the study has a number of limitations. The first is the small sample size, which prevents us from making general claims. More research is required in order to analyse the pragmatic function of translanguaging in telecollaborative environments. The second limitation is that the telecollaboration project merely lasted six weeks, therefore, a very limited amount of spontaneous interaction took place between students from both Universities.

As suggested by Cenoz (2019) and Yurievna Sokolovskaya et al. (2023), English is part of the linguistic repertoire of several speakers whose L1 is not necessarily English. She also claims that, "The more English becomes 'everybody's' language, the more it dissociates itself from English as a native language" (2019, p. 72). This statement aligns with the paradigm shift from the unrealistic native-speaker model to Byram's (1997, 2021) intercultural speaker. In fact, in today's globalised world, intercultural communication should be approached as a relevant matter and a "prerequisite for the long-term advancement of human civilization" (Irina Alexandrovna et al., 2023, p. 310). It is, therefore, more important than ever to explore the pragmatic implications of the discourse produced by intercultural speakers using English, as well as other languages (e.g., Spanish in this case), as a lingua franca, since pragmatic competence and ICC hold a symbiotic relationship (Di Sarno-García, 2026). Telecollaboration offers a valuable third space (Wimpenny & Orsini-Jones, 2020) which embraces bi- and multilingual practices as a way of learning a foreign language and challenging monolingual perspectives (Walker, 2018).

Notes

[1]https://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the students who took part in this project for helping us in collecting meaningful data.

Information on Informed Consent or any Data Privacy Statements

All participants in this study signed a consent form which contained an explanation of the aims of the research and how the data collected would be used. Their anonymity is completely ensured. The researchers discussed with the instructor of each institution the purpose and the context of the study in advance.

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed to the design and implementation of the study, as well as to writing the paper.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this paper declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Board Approval Statements

Not applicable

Funding

The study was funded by Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain), grant number PAID-01-19.

References

Alonso-Belmonte, I., & Vinagre, M. (2017). Interculturality and identity in computer-mediated communication: findings from L2 teaching contexts. *Computer Assisted Language Learning 30*(5), pp. 343–350. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2017.1321329

Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). 27. Code-switching in computer-mediated communication. In S. Herring, D. Stein, & T. Virtanen, T. (Eds.), *Pragmatics of computer-mediated communication*, (pp. 667-694). De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214468.667

Belz, J. A. (2003). Linguistic perspectives on the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. *Language Learning & Technology, 7*(2), 68–99.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (1st ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence revisited* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800410251

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal, 95*(3), 401–417. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41262375

Canals, L. (2021). Multimodality and translanguaging in negotiation of meaning. *Foreign Language Annals, 54*(3), 647-670. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12547

Canals, L. (2022). The role of the language of interaction and translanguaging on attention to interactional feedback in virtual exchanges. *System, 105*, 102721. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102721

Canals, L. (2023). Translanguaging practices and metalinguistic reflection during negotiation of meaning in tandem virtual exchanges. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature, 16*(3), e1135-e1135. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.1135

Cenoz, J. (2019). Translanguaging pedagogies and English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching, 52*(1), 71-85. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000246

Chapelle, C. A. (2003). *English language learning and technology: Lectures on applied linguistics in the age of information and communication technology.* John Benjamins.

Chen, Y., Di Sarno-García, S., Orsini-Jones, M., & Díaz Pedroza, K. G. (2025). Exploring student experiences and attitudes toward engagement in a synchronous virtual exchange for English language teaching. *AILA Special Issue 38*(2), 324–352. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.24042.che

Clavijo Olarte, A., Medina, R. A., Calderon-Aponte, D., Rodríguez, A., Prieto, K., & Náder, M. C. (2023). Raising awareness of the city as a text: Multimodal, multicultural, and multilingual resources for education. In A. Salmon & A. Clavijo-Olarte (Eds.), *Handbook of research on socio-cultural and linguistic perspectives on language and literacy development* (pp. 239-264). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-5022-2.ch013

Colpaert, J. (2020). Editorial position paper: How virtual is your research? *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 33*(7), 653-664.

Cook, V. J. (1992). Evidence for multicompetence. *Language Learning, 42*(4), 557-591. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1992.tb01044.x

Coperías Aguilar, M. J. (2002). Intercultural communicative competence: A step beyond communicative competence. *ELIA, 3*, 85-102.

Cots, J. M., Llurda, E., & Garrett, P. (2014). Language policies and practices in the internationalisation of higher education on the European margins: an introduction. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 35*(4), 311–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.874430

Dendrinos, B. (2001). The pedagogic discourse of EFL and the discursive construction of the NS's professional value. In *International Conference on Non-Native Speaking Teachers in Foreign Language Teaching*, Lleida, Catalonia, Spain.

Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education: A theoretical and methodological toolbox*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Di Sarno-García, S. (2026). *Acquiring pragmatic and intercultural communicative competences in the digital era: A telecollaboration study*. Bloomsbury.

Dooly, M., & Smith, B. (2020). Telecollaboration and virtual exchange between practice and research: A conversation. *Journal of Virtual Exchange, 3*(SI), 63–81. https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.3.36085

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging, language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Giles, H., & Ogay, T. (2007). Communication accommodation theory. In B. B. Whaley & W. Samter (Eds.), *Explaining communication: Contemporary theories and exemplars* (pp. 293–310). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Gimeno-Sanz, A. (2026). Foreword. In Di Sarno-García, S., *Acquiring pragmatic and intercultural communicative ccompetences in the digital era: A telecollaboration study*. Bloomsbury.

González-Lloret, M. (2019). Technology and L2 pragmatics learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 39*, pp. 113–127. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190519000047

González-Lloret, M. (2021). L2 pragmatics and CALL. *Language Learning & Technology, 25*(3), 90–105. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/73451

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, Volume 3: Speech Acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.

Hauck, M. (2023). From virtual exchange to critical virtual exchange and critical internationalization at home. *The Global Impact Exchange, 2023(Spring),* pp. 9–12.

Helm, F. (2018). *Emerging identities in virtual exchange.* Research-publishing. Net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2018.25.9782490057191

Hildeblando Júnior, C. A. (2023). Virtual exchange as a third space to decolonise ELT (VETSDELT) project: Rreport on its first action-research cycle. Orsini-Jones, M., Hildeblando Júnior, C.A., Cerveró-Carrascosa, A., Di Sarno-García, S. & Aşik, A. (Eds.), *Discussing Global Citizenship in Language Learning and Teaching – Symposium Proceedings Coventry University November 2022*. Coventry University. https://doi.org/10.18552/GLEA/2023/0006

Huang, L. (2024). *Empowering novice mandarin learners' Transformative learning through critical virtual exchange—A multimodal, translanguaging Design* (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo).

Irina Alexandrovna, S., Marina Victorovna, K. and Marina Segreevna, I. (2023). Multilingual and multicultural education for students in English language education systems. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 14*(3), 310-314. https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2023.19557

Ishihara, N. (2021). From a native-nonnative speaker dichotomy to a translingual framework. In J. Félix-Brasdefer & R. Shively (Ed.), *New directions in second language pragmatics* (pp. 300-313). De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110721775-020

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2014). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet.* Routledge.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2001). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Blackwell.

Kramsch, C. (2012). *The multilingual subject*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press.

Leone, P., & Telles, J. (2016). The teletandem network. In R. O'Dowd & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Online intercultural exchange: Policy, pedagogy, practice* (pp. 273–298). Longman.

Liyanage, I., Tao, W. (2020). Preparation of teachers and multilingual education: Ethical, just, and student-focused practices. In Tao, W., Liyanage, I. (Eds.), *Multilingual education yearbook 2020.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41211-1_1

Ma, Y. & Li, M. (2024). Unpacking translanguaging in refusals on Chinese social media: Strategies, distribution, and functions. *Multilingua, 43*(4), 487-524. https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2023-0071

Martín-Laguna, S. (2022). The multilingual turn in pragmatics: Is the use of hedges and attitude markers shared across languages in trilingual writing? *Applied Pragmatics, 4*(1), 63-91. https://doi.org/10.1075/ap.20024.mar

Nightingale, R., & Safont, P. (2019). Pragmatic translanguaging: Multilingual practice in adolescent online discourse. In P. Salazar-Campillo, & V. Codina-Espurz (Eds.), *Investigating the learning of pragmatics across ages and contexts* (pp. 167-195). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004409699_009

O'Dowd, R. (2012). Intercultural communicative competence through telecollaboration. In J. Jackson, (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication,* (1st ed, pp. 342-358). Routledge.

O'Dowd, R. (2018). From telecollaboration to virtual exchange: State-of-the-art and the role of UNICollaboration in moving forward. *Journal of Virtual Exchange, 1*, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2018.jve.1

Oliveira, R. A. D. de. (2024). The use of Spanish in oral Portuguese-English Teletandem sessions in the MulTeC corpus: a study in light of the concept of translanguaging. *The ESPecialist, 45*(3), 154–182. https://doi.org/10.23925/2318-7115.2024v45i3e65912

Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review, 6*(3), 281-307. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014

Ortega, L. (2017). New CALL-SLA Research interfaces for the 21st century: Towards equitable multilingualism. *CALICO Journal, 34*(3), 285-316. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.33855

Picoli, F. (2019). *Projeto Teletandem Brasil: Um estudo do princípio da igualdade nas interações sob a ótica da alternância de códigos.* Universidade Estadual Paulista.

Picoli, F., & Salomão, A. C. B. (2020). O princípio da separação de línguas no teletandem: O que as teorias propõem e como ele funciona na prática. *Estudos Linguísticos, 49*(3), 1605-1623.

Rahimi Domakani, M., Hashemian, M., & Mansoori, S. (2013). Pragmatic awareness of the request speech act in English as an additional language: Monolinguals or bilinguals? *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 4*(1), 88-110.

Rahimi Domakani, M., Mirzaei, A., & Zeraatpisheh, S. (2014). L2 learners' affect and pragmatic performance: A focus on emotional intelligence and gender dimensions. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 5*(2), 149-174.

Ren, W., & Guo, Y. (2022). Translanguaging in self-praise on Chinese social media. *Applied Linguistics Review, 15*(1), 355-376. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2021-0169

Rubin, J. (2016). The collaborative online international learning network: online intercultural exchange in the State University of New York Network of Universities. In R. O'Dowd & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Online intercultural exchange: Policy, pedagogy, practice* (pp. 263–272). Routledge.

Sadler, R. W., & Dooly, M. (2022). Telecollaboration. In N. Ziegler & M. González-Lloret (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and technology* (pp. 245–257). Routledge.

Salomão, A. C., & Viana da Silva, E. (2023). Words out of feelings: Global competence and emotional intelligence in a virtual exchange program. In S. Di Sarno-García, S. Montaner-Villalba, & A. Gimeno-Sanz (Eds.), *Telecollaboration applications in foreign language classrooms* (pp. 182-203). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7080-0.ch009

Satar, M., Aranha, S., Cavalari, S. M. S., & Almijiwl, W. (2024). Low proficiency level learners' translingual and transmodal practices in teletandem: Challenging the separation of languages principle. *System, 120*, 103187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103187

Sykes, J. M. (2017). Technologies for teaching and learning intercultural competence and interlanguage pragmatics. In C. A. Chapelle & S. Sauro (Eds.), *The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning* (pp. 118–133). Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118914069.ch9

Sykes, J. M. (2018). Interlanguage pragmatics, curricular innovation, and digital technologies. *CALICO Journal, 35*(2), 120–141. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.36175

Taguchi, N. (2018). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

Vassallo, M. L., & Telles, J. A. (2006). Foreign language learning in-tandem: Theoretical principles and research perspectives. *The ESPecialist, 27*(1), 83-118.

Walker, U. (2018). Translanguaging: Affordances for collaborative language learning. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics, 24*(1), 18-39.

Wimpenny, K., Orsini-Jones, M. (2020). Innovation in collaborative online international learning: A holistic blend. In Burgos, D. (Eds.), *Radical solutions and e-learning. lecture notes in educational technology*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4952-6_1

Yurievna Sokolovskaya, A., Khalirahmanovna Aleeva, G., Nikolaevna Nikolaeva, L., & Foatovna Zagidullina, G. (2023). Interference in teaching English to bilinguals. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 14*(3), 31-35. https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2023.19380

Zorina, A., & Pomortseva, N. (2023). Identifying the communication challenges of non-English speakers in communicating in English. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 14*(3), 109-113. https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2023.19464

© 2026 by the authors. Licensee Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0 license). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).