

# Translanguaging: A Promising Approach to Enhance English Learning in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract**—New perspectives incorporating a more flexible plurilingual approach to language teaching have recently emerged. This paper aims to develop a conceptual framework that suggests a teaching policy methodology that enhances English education in Saudi Arabia. It includes a thorough revision of the nature of Saudi language pedagogy. The study argued for a better understanding of bilingual practices and for utilizing students' pluralist resources of knowledge to develop their academic, communicative and literacy skills. It also called for a critical review of the conventional methodology of language education that is entirely based on adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries between languages. As a result, it is suggested that translanguaging be implemented as a communicative strategy to support English education and encourage linguistic diversity in the Saudi context. Moreover, developmental recommendations regarding English teaching and translanguaging implementation that are useful both locally and internationally are incorporated.

**Index Terms**—translanguaging, language planning, bilingual education, EFL, Saudi Arabia

## I. INTRODUCTION

New perspectives have emerged in language education that encourage a shift from monolingual methods that relied totally on the exclusive use of a target language in the classroom to a more flexible plurilingual approach. This shift was the result of English often being the most widely taught foreign or second language. Moreover, because it is the most prominent of languages in the multilingual teacher's repertoire, it has become the language of instruction for all educational subjects in many educational institutions the world over. Over time, however, teaching in English has become one of the most heated topics discussed in education around the world today as its policies and methodologies are still found to be problematic (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Therefore, as indicated by Cenoz and Gorter (2020), it is necessary to take the complex and intense relationship between English and multilingualism into account when teaching English to compete with the special economic and social characteristics of modern societies.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that proposes a teaching policy methodology that enhances English education, encourages bilingual practices, and promotes multilingualism in Saudi Arabia. It critically examines the history of English language education in Saudi contexts and sheds light on recent linguistic practices that reflect complex teaching challenges in the field. This paper argues that a new approach to English teaching that is aligned with the educational goals of Saudi Vision 2030 to deal with the challenges of current social and economic change in Saudi Arabia and to meet the needs of contemporary highly diverse societies is required.

## II. DISCUSSION

To achieve the purpose of this theoretical study, this review is comprised of an extensive discussion of the current literature in a Saudi linguistic setting as well as language planning and policy including English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning in SA. Further exploration of bilingual education and multilingual practices, specifically translanguaging as a new approach to support language learning and enhance linguistic diversity, has been incorporated in this section.

### A. Saudi Current Linguistic Setting

As the kingdom's primary language, Arabic is also Saudi Arabia's official national language and is considered one of the main elements of Arab, and thus, Saudi historical and cultural legacy. Therefore, as mentioned in Saudi Vision 2030, the language must be recognized, valued and preserved in order to meet vision objectives "by keeping true to our national values and principles, as well as by encouraging social development and upholding the Arabic language" (Saudi Vision 2030, 2022, p. 17). In fact, since the unification of lands as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) by King Abdulaziz bin Saud in September 1932, the status of Arabic and its preservation and consolidation has always been of high priority (Alzumor, 2019). The religious status of Arabic has also been reported by several researchers concerning language policy across several Middle Eastern countries including SA. It has been described as "a holy tongue" and "the language of the intellectuals, power holders and dominant groups in the region" (Mahboob et al., 2018, p. 3). However, due to its diverse population, Saudi Arabia is not a monolingual country where only Arabic is spoken in everyday conversations across the country; indeed, there are other languages spoken in Saudi Arabia as well – the result of many factors.

The kingdom has an ideological, economic, and political influence which makes it a destination for population movements (De Bel-Air, 2018). Its religious status as the home of two of Islam's holiest sites alongside its role in the world's economy because of its large number of oil reserves, Saudi Arabia attracts foreign visitors, experts, and laborers from the world over. In mid-2021, 34.1 million non-nationals made up an estimated 36.4% of the population of Saudi Arabia (GASat, 2021). According to World Bank statistics (cited in De Bel-Air, 2018), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is among the top five migrant destinations in the world. In his study of the code-switching phenomenon in Saudi hospitals, Alhamami (2020) stated that non-nationals make up a great percentage of the healthcare workforce and patients in the kingdom and include those whose native tongues are Hindi, Tagalog, Urdu, Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Turkish, and Nepalese. He confirms that there is a unique multilingual discourse in Saudi Arabia workplaces specifically in various healthcare facilities.

Nevertheless, being the lingua franca of the world, English is a widely spoken and understood language across the country, particularly in urban areas where it is taught in public and private educational contexts and used in corporate sectors including holy places, media, business, tourism, and international communication (Elyas & Picard, 2010; ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

### *B. The Transformative Cross-Sectoral Agenda: Saudi Vision 2030*

Vision 2030 is a unique, ambitious, and transformative plan for economic, educational, and social reform in Saudi Arabia. It is led by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammed bin Salman, beginning on 25 April 2016, and built around three main themes: "a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation" (Saudi Vision 2030, 2022, p. 13). According to the official document of Saudi Vision 2030 (2022, p. 6), the major goal of the vision is to develop the country's different sectors as "the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds".

Education is one of the main sectors that contribute to achieving Vision 2030; thus, education reform is part of its critical agenda. However, improving the kingdom's educational system has always been a concern of the Saudi government since the establishment of the kingdom. Regular increases in the budget for the development of education have been reported by several national and international institutions such as the World Bank and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) as well as several scholars (e.g., Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Alotaibi, 2014; Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2017). In the same line, the ambitious reform blueprint reveals various overlapping educational objectives as can be recognized from the statement of the crown prince below:

We will continue investing in education and training so that our young men and women are equipped for the jobs of the future. We want Saudi children, wherever they live, to enjoy higher quality, multi-faceted education. We will invest particularly in developing early childhood education, refining our national curriculum, and training our teachers and educational leaders. We will also redouble efforts to ensure that the outcomes of our education system are in line with market needs. (Saudi Vision 2030, 2022, p. 36)

Accordingly, the transformation agenda includes reform plans for each component of the education system including learning objectives, curriculum, methodology, assessments, and teacher training (OECD, 2020; Albiladi, 2022). The connection between reform in education and the economy can be recognized straight from the prince's words above. The vision includes an objective that is directly related to "an education that contributes to economic growth" (Saudi Vision 2030, 2021, p. 40). Therefore, it implies several strategies and projects aligned with these objectives for ensuring a high-quality education system.

To achieve the aspirations of Vision 2030, 13 programs have been introduced including the Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) and the National Labor Gateway (TAQAT). The National Transformation Program 2020 has been developed to achieve the longer-term aspirations of the Saudi Vision 2030. It consists of multiple projects and incorporates key performance indicators which include 36 Ministry of Education initiatives that are aligned with regional and global benchmarks (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018).

### *C. Language Education Policy in Saudi Arabia*

As mentioned earlier, Arabic has a special ideological status in Saudi Arabia. Thus, language planning efforts were mostly directed at the literacy skills development and maintenance of Arabic. Saudi language planning could be described as a top-down language policy. Arabic is defined by the official authorities in the education sector as the main medium of instruction in Saudi public education unless there is a necessity to use other languages (Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2017; Alomaim & Altameemi, 2022). Alzumor (2019) mentions several formal statements and acts regarding Arabic policy that include the obligation to specifically use Arabic in its standard form in education, media, public speech, courts, business, and trade contexts. Moreover, Arabic, or bilingual documents that surely include Arabic, must be written when communicating with external institutions or companies. Saudi language policy also involves teaching Arabic to non-Arabic and international students and workers. Accordingly, institutions and centers were opened across the countries with specific curricula designed for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers (Saleh, 2017).

The national objectives of Vision 2030 also introduce various initiatives and programs to develop Arabic education and enhance its learning process. According to the Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD, 2020), the Arabic language is considered a crucial subject to align Saudi education with modern educational trends and practices that focus on creativity and productivity in the educational system.

On the other hand, English in Saudi Arabia is taught as a foreign language. Unlike other foreign languages, English has an officially unique status as the primary foreign language to be taught and used throughout the country. In fact, it is taught as a compulsory subject in all grades of Saudi public and private schools as well as all university levels (Alseghayer, 2014a). Recently, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented the teaching of English starting in the first grade of primary school during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 (MOE, 2021). The aim of teaching English in these early grades is “to keep pace with requirements, enhance their skills for the twenty-first century, and to meet the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution” (MOE, 2021). This is just one of the various policies and initiatives introduced in Saudi Arabia to promote English language learning and proficiency.

Moreover, in several employment sectors and institutions, English is a highly desired, if not mandatory, requirement for employment and admission in different programs and courses (Almukhallafi, 2019). This special status of English, which is not exclusive to Saudi Arabia, is due to its domination as the lingua franca of people from all over the world (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Accordingly, English has been selected across various educational systems around the world as the foreign language to be both taught and taught in (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Alseghayer, 2015).

English is also regarded as a major vehicle of economic and scientific development in the kingdom (Elyas & Picard, 2010; ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013; Alseghayer, 2014a). The economic value of English was recognized very early in Saudi Arabia. As mentioned earlier in this paper, there is a flux of foreign manpower to the country. For economic, security and technological considerations, the Saudi government seeks foreign workers and managers to train local workers. Thus, English is the medium of training and communication between different parties across organizations and companies inside and outside the country (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). English is also a critical tool to prepare students for scholarships that are primarily granted in the USA and Britain to gain Western education that helps the country keep pace with developed nations in different fields, especially science and technology (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

Moreover, with the influence of globalization and modernization, a universal language is required to reflect the position of the country and to convey its promising vision to the world (Alseghayer, 2015). Soon after launching the Saudi 2030 Vision, the country established the General Entertainment Authority in May 2016 to attract visitors of different cultural backgrounds and enhance the tourism sector. Such initiatives and projects assert the importance of English education to serve the country’s diverse objectives. According to Yusuf (2017) and Almukhallafi (2019), for the Saudi government, English is helpful in the exchange of cultures, the maintenance of peace, the permanence of prosperity, and the building of cultural and political relationships with countries worldwide. Therefore, a heavy burden is carried by the education sector to equip students with needs that contribute to reaching the country’s plans and ambitions (Saudi Vision 2030, 2021; OECD, 2020).

#### *D. Complex Relationship Between Arabic and English in the Saudi Context*

As described by Mahboob and Elyas (2014), English is not a “neutral” language in the Saudi context. English planning in Saudi Arabia has a long history of conflict and English teaching has always been a heated controversial topic. Teaching English was not entirely welcome in the early language policies of the country. Conflicts in English planning and practice in Saudi Arabia were indicated in several studies on English education in the country (e.g., Alzahrani, 2017; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2017). As mentioned in the above section, there was a strong regulation to use only Arabic as a medium of instruction and knowledge transmission in all educational stages.

Despite the recent and sustained efforts to promote English learning in Saudi Arabia, there is still some resistance to English being taught or even spoken in Saudi society. This attitude is related to the belief that teaching English affects Islamic values by adopting Western culture and ideologies (Al Haq & Smadi, 1996; cited in Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). For some voices in Saudi Arabia, English is considered a threat to local culture and Islamic beliefs. Such ideology against English in society has been heavily reflected in the history of language policy in schools (see section 6 below). Barnawi and Alhawsawi (2017) refer to the ambiguity that surrounds English education policies and practices in Saudi Arabia that were clearly affected by ideological, social and cultural perspectives experienced in Saudi interactional contexts.

However, a shift in this strict language ideology and policy has recently occurred that allows for more flexible discourse for both Arabic and English across different contexts according to the need and under the policy admitted by the official councils (Alzumr, 2019).

#### *E. Challenges in English Education in Saudi Arabia*

Although there have been positive attitudes among Saudi policymakers and teachers toward the rapid reforms implied in Saudi Vision 2030 which is imposed by the universal, social, technical, and economic change, achieving real and valuable transformation of education requires a more steady and sometimes more thoughtful application. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there have been both internal and external pressures for radical change in education to help the country compete in global markets and be a part of the universal educational system (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Several researchers such as Almohanna (2010), Alseghayer (2014b), Alzahrani (2017), and Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) have indicated that there have unsatisfactory outcomes and poor overall performance in English among Saudi students. Thus, English education in the country was described by Alseghayer (2014b, p. 17) as “suffering, not up to the mark and below expectations”.

Alshehri (2020) calls for considering several issues that may hinder the effective reforms of the English educational system including the technological infrastructure, facilities and resources, and English teaching training as well as cultural incorporation. In the same vein, researchers such as Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) and Albiladi (2022) argue for urgent and major reform of the language educational system in Saudi Arabia to support the rapid movement of the country into a knowledge-based economy through a more comprehensive language teaching policy that considers issues faced by people involved in the field. They ask that further attention be directed towards teachers' perceptions and training, as well as the development of methodologies and strategies that promote critical thinking and stimulate creativity and innovation skills in EFL classrooms.

The administrative educational system is among the critical areas that need improvement in Saudi Arabia where the education sector - including language education policy and practices (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) - is highly regulated and completely managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In the Saudi education system, English teachers, like other teachers, work within a strict hierarchy within the educational system frameworks that are highly affected by national and religious ideology (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Further, the management system is described as a vertical multi-layered bureaucracy system of the MOE (OECD, 2020).

This top-down management policy is clearly reflected in the curriculum, methodology and assessment procedures as well as the materials including textbooks which are highly governed by MOE regulations, and teachers are required to stick to the content and timeline proposed by the ministry. This, in effect, reduces the space of local collaboration and innovation from people working within the context such as teachers, supervisors, and school managers (OECD, 2020). Alseghayer (2015) reports that English teachers have unsatisfactory impressions of the textbooks they are directed to use. Similarly, Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) assert the huge mistake that needs a shift in language education in Saudi Arabia is ignoring the teachers and dealing with them as passive recipients rather than being agents and active partners in education reforms.

This ideology plays a major role in English teaching and is highly reflected in English classroom practices. To be more specific, the teacher's power is articulated in Islamic culture and could notably be recognized in English interactional practices through the teacher-centered methodologies prevailing in EFL classrooms (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) methodologies are part of the most intense discussions about English in the Arab world (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Applying traditional methods in TEFL in Saudi Arabia is a critical issue reported by researchers. Almohanna (2010) and Alseghayer (2015) claim that the traditional methods used in TEFL classrooms often follow audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods with various conventional techniques such as memorizing, structural analysis, chorus work, answering questions, corrections, and text translation. Such strategies are often teacher-based methods in which the students are completely and passively relying on their teachers' grammar explanations and vocabulary presentations.

Thus, there are calls to reform outdated policies in Saudi English teaching, specifically traditional methods, through incorporating more collaborative learning that enhances the social and communication skills of students (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). Recently, several scholars, such as Alharbi (2015), Allmnakrah and Evers (2020), and Albiladi (2022) have argued for implementing communicative cooperative language teaching methods so students can keep up with the country's developmental objectives which align with the global demands.

Furthermore, cultural factors affect English teaching in terms of integrating teaching English with its cultural contexts. Generally, Saudi education of English fails to incorporate culture into EFL teaching practices. For ideological considerations mentioned above, the fear of teaching Western culture leads to teaching English isolated from its cultural base (Alseghayer, 2015). Alsamani (2014) mentions two main reasons for the failure to integrate culture into English education in Saudi Arabia including a lack of knowledge about English culture as well as the fear of teaching content that includes materials contrary to Islamic values and local customs. Such cultural sensitivity has a prominent effect on English teaching resources and materials which often appears in avoiding using authentic materials of ideological bias (Alzaharani, 2017). The absence of cultural awareness in TEFL in Saudi Arabia has been reported by various researchers (e.g., Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Alharbi, 2015; Alseghayer, 2015; Alshehri, 2020). Barnawi and Alhawsawi (2017) argue the need for the internationalization of language education and national cultural identity in both schooling and higher education systems in Saudi Arabia to achieve the country's economic plans.

Still, these cultural factors affect students' motivation to study English. Ur Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) claim that students' aptitude and motivation to learn English are obstacles facing English teachers. Likewise, Alseghayer (2014b, p.18) discusses the extent to which students' beliefs and motivations influence their classroom performance including students' perceptions of English, their experiences with learning English, and their expectations about studying English. Thus, Alotaibi (2014) argues that cultural values must be of high concern when teaching English, especially for the recently implemented early grades. Similarly, Barnawi and Alhawsawi (2017) call for urgent English education policy reforms through the design of a language education framework that is based on the national culture and local intellectual conditions of the country.

#### *F. New Vistas in Language Teaching: Multilingual Language Education*

Nowadays, multilingualism is increasingly prevalent all over the world. It is not the exception but has become the norm in a highly interconnected world. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2020), diversity has recently become a characteristic of society in Europe and other countries around the world. Globalization, modernization, and immigration

play a major role in changing people's social lives in various societies (Blommaert, 2010). People now live in superdiverse societies in which they interact through dynamic and complex sorts of communication (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2015). This huge interconnectedness of societies leads to new and unprecedented forms of social and cultural diversity resulting in more complex forms of linguistic and social practices (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Thus, the study of language in society must be revised and must focus on a comprehensive theoretical and methodological perception when studying language contact and language practices in different contexts. Researchers in various disciplines of linguistics including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics have called for the consideration of new trends in studying the linguistic practices of people and considering the dynamically developed societies. According to Blommaert and Rampton (2011, p. 3), "Rather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication".

Hence, new perspectives emerged in language education that urged more flexible plurilingual methods in language teaching instead of monolingual approaches that relied totally on the exclusive use of a target language in the classroom. The recent new trends are found in language education research due to the span of the traditional views of teaching languages that see languages as isolated entities that could be taught as separated items. Such traditional views devalue bilingual and multilingual practices and see them go against ideal monolingual/native speakers. The proponents of this conventional vision assume multilingualism is a real threat to home language maintenance since it promotes the dominance of English over other minority and less widely-known languages (Li, 2018; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

However, concerning the experiences of bilingual and multilingual speakers, researchers assert the value of multilingualism in promoting both home and second languages. Moreover, the advantages of multilingualism were identified by scholars in the field (e.g., Li, 2000; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Aldosari & Alsultan, 2017) who mentioned the numerous positive effects of bilingualism on children at the cognitive, communicative, and cultural levels.

Hence, away from the traditional views, new insights reveal that English learners should not be seen only through the "Inner Circle" of typical contact that is often found in English countries, but rather through looking at the wider interactions with speakers from the "Outer and Expanding Circle" in their diverse communities of practice (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). This view argues for considering social context and diverse characteristics of communication of English learners who have their own home languages.

Saudi Arabia is not much different from other multilingual countries in that it has a complex linguistic landscape with super-diverse norms of communication. Multilingualism is a significant aspect of Saudi society due to its diverse population, international relationships, and economic growth. Therefore, achieving proficiency in both English and Arabic is the objective highlighted in the official document of the country. Multilingual language proficiency that values both national heritage language as well as international communicative tools is the target to achieve its various transformative strategies including its social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and demographic plans.

### *G. Translanguaging: The Pedagogic Potentials for Language Learning*

Translanguaging is a concept used recently to describe the linguistic practices of multilingual speakers in various contexts. According to Li (2018), translanguaging first emerged as a descriptive rather than theoretical concept and is used to describe a specific linguistic behavior. The term was first introduced in Welsh bilingual education by Williams in the 1980s for the Welsh-English pedagogical practices of students when deliberately switching the language mode of input and output in the classroom (Lewis et al., 2012b). Hence, translanguaging is commonly noticed in bilingual classrooms (Lewis et al., 2012a, 2012b; Garcia & Li, 2013). It is defined by Garcia (2009, p. 45) as "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds".

However, translanguaging is a developing concept that is used primarily in bilingual educational settings and then extended to include various sociolinguistic arenas where it is utilized based on the cross-disciplinary notions of linguists, sociolinguists, educationalists, and neurolinguists (Garcia, 2009; Lewis et al., 2012b). Recently, Li (2018) emphasized translanguaging as a new transdisciplinary theoretical perspective that should be recognized and used beyond the artificial and ideological divides between different disciplines like linguistics, psychology, and sociology, and between various linguistic varieties such as indigenous versus immigrant, majority versus minority, and target versus mother tongue languages. The term has been broadened and has become more associated with new trends and includes further aspects of multilingualism such as everyday social interaction, cross-modal and multi-modal communication, linguistic landscape, and visual arts (Li, 2018; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Unlike other traditional concepts of bilingual interaction such as code-switching, code-mixing and language choice that analyze bilingual discourse as separated linguistic codes, translanguaging is concerned with the flexibility and dynamic use of languages in communication and focuses on how language users employ their discursive and multiple meaning-making and sense-making resources in their daily social interaction (Li, 2018; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Garc ía & Kleifgen, 2020).

However, translanguaging does not replace the common concepts but rather challenges them to focus on interconnectedness and multimodality in human communication (Li, 2018). Further explanation was presented by Li as follows:

It [translanguaging] is not conceived as an object or a linguistic structural phenomenon to describe and analyse but a practice and a process—a practice that involves dynamic and functionally integrated use of different

languages and language varieties, but more importantly a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond language(s). (Li, 2018, p. 15)

Though, ideologically speaking, translanguaging is like other bilingual practices that were not welcomed both among people in the wider society and within the educational environments. This may be due to the negative attitudes of those who believed the detrimental effects of bilingualism on psychological and linguistic development as well as human intellectual and spiritual growth even among scholars and intellectuals themselves (Li, 2000). These beliefs survived and were reflected in language classrooms where a monolingual or a target-language-only approach was commonly used which stressed the notion of limited or prevented use of L1 in L2 learning classrooms (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Creese and Blackledge (2010) refer to situations in which the two languages are kept rigidly separated with teachers and students often feeling embarrassed or even guilty about their bilingual practices.

Complicated language arrangements are still found in most language education contexts where language policy during the learning process is not well defined or certainly declared (Brown, 2007). Moreover, conflicts between language policy and actual practices in terms of the linguistic medium of instruction and learning were reported in several educational contexts as instructors seek to minimize the home language practice while maximizing the target language's use (Li & Martin, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, classrooms are increasingly characterized by the plurality of practices while a monolithic view of ethnolinguistic contact has been considerably under question (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Thus, calls for a comprehensive interpretation of bilingual practices seem to be necessary. For example, Cummins (2005) claims the need to move beyond the squandering of bilingual resources in mainstream contexts (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Similarly, several researchers such as Creese and Blackledge (2010), Garcia and Sylvan (2011), Cenoz (2013), as well as Cenoz and Gorter (2013) call for allowing students to have access to pluralistic resources of knowledge they have.

Furthermore, Li (2018, p. 14) asserts the need to address what he calls "Post-Multilingualism challenges" as the notion of different languages or varieties is no longer accepted or could be reliable in today's complex interdependent communication where speakers themselves build or break borders according to their interactional contexts.

Thus, a shift in language ideology towards bilingual behaviors including translanguaging was inevitable and urgent especially within different academic contexts to allow students to benefit from their translanguaging instinct and to normally use obtainable spaces and multiple natural resources to make sense of the world. Currently, researchers like Li (2018) and Garc ía and Kleifgen (2020) argue for critical understandings of language use that go beyond traditional views that claim separate conventionally-named languages or separate modes. One example of the historical change in language ideology towards bilingual practices in education was described by Garcia and Sylvan (2011) when examining bilingual speakers in an international high school in the US that passed three phases starting from strictly monolingual schools to linear bilingualism and recently more flexible dynamic bilingualism in schools. Such are the translanguaging theories developed by various scholars who play a great role in transforming society's understanding of multilingual language use and literacy practices (Garc ía & Kleifgen, 2020).

Hence, translanguaging could be defined as both an act of bilingual performance and a bilingual pedagogy for teaching and learning (Garcia & Li, 2013). Supporting this point, research carried out on translanguaging literacy and pedagogy by researchers such as Canagarajah (2011), Hornberger and Link (2012), Creese and Blackledge (2010), Creese and Blackledge (2015), Garcia and Li (2013), Garcia and Sylvan (2011), Garc ía and Kleifgen (2020), and Cenoz and Gorter (2020) is broadened to include the theory and practices of translanguaging across different pedagogical contexts including bilingual schools, communities and complementary schools as well as foreign and second language classrooms.

The contribution of translanguaging in language education as an instructional strategy that integrates languages for scaffolding language learning and enhancing language awareness is indicated in several recent studies. Hornberger and Link (2012) assert the important role of transnational literacies and translanguaging pedagogy for both government and classroom policy-makers to develop innovative programs, curricula, and practices that incorporate students' multiple dynamic communicative and literacy repertoires as resources for learning. Through translanguaging practices in the classroom, there is significant potential to utilize access to different academic content, media and other resources found in various sites. Pedagogical translanguaging can be employed both in language classrooms to enhance a variety of linguistic skills such as English academic vocabulary and reading skills and in content classes to incorporate metalinguistic awareness and knowledge along with pragmatic and discourse competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Based on several contexts of research, Garc ía and Kleifgen (2020, p. 9) named four critical skills being enhanced through pedagogical translanguaging including: 1) Deepening student's understanding of texts; 2) generating students' diverse texts; 3) developing students' "confianza" (English: "trust") in performing literacies and 4) fostering critical metalinguistic awareness. Hence, translanguaging could serve as an effective strategy for performing various tasks and accomplishing several educational and communicative functions in language classrooms.

#### *H. Translanguaging: A Promising Approach to Enhance English Learning in Saudi Arabia*

Over the last few years, translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in TEFL and content knowledge classrooms has been studied in the Saudi context. Alsaawi (2019) examined language use and attitudes of business university students towards translanguaging. He found that translanguaging is a highly effective method used by students and their teachers to enhance their comprehension. Translanguaging was also beneficial for employing students' complete linguistic

repertoire and gave enough good space to maximize English use during the learning process. Thus, Alsaawi recommends flexibility in language use to achieve better intended learning outcomes.

Alahdal's (2020) study of teachers' attitudes toward "translanguaging" (as named by Alahdal) was to explore the suitability of the translanguaging approach to the critical TEFL situation in Saudi Arabia. The study confirms the positive attitudes of English teachers toward translanguaging as they believe that the English monolingual strategy could be biased against students in acquiring their content knowledge through a language that they still learn. It was found that translanguaging presents better learner involvement in the learning process and allows for the transferring of mother tongue skills into English.

Similarly, Alzabidi and Alahdal (2021) investigated students' perspectives on translanguaging in ESL upper-secondary classrooms in Saudi Arabia. In contrast to the above findings, students in this context were hesitant and seemed unfamiliar with translanguaging and were still in favor of the traditional monolingual approach. They concluded that students may have had only the slightest background information on translanguaging and may not have been exposed to the scientific data supporting the use of translanguaging and affirming its benefits to second language education. Alasmari et al. (2022) examined teachers' online translanguaging practices and ideologies in the Saudi context and found that translanguaging was more common during office hours. They also outline considerable numbers of positive functions of translanguaging in language learning classrooms including facilitating knowledge construction and content understanding, creating a positive and dynamic learning atmosphere, and increasing student engagement and motivation, especially for students with low levels of proficiency, as well as supporting classroom management.

A similar conclusion was reached by Alqahtani (2022) who found greater faith in students who were taught using the conventional language learning approach, applying only English use in the EFL classes. However, positive attitudes towards translanguaging were also found which reflects potential conflict in English classrooms that need extensive efforts by teachers and policymakers before exposing learners to translanguaging in such contexts.

Other studies have likewise argued for promoting bilingual education in Saudi Arabia. Alharbi (2015) calls for converting some public schools into bilingual schools to overcome the students' deficiency in English communication competence and enhance English mastery in the kingdom. He claims that bilingual education will end up with economic and educational outcomes as it will reduce the budget assigned for sending students to learn English abroad. Alotaibi (2014) recommends teaching English to early-grade students in Saudi Arabia based on his revision of the literature on bilingual education and second language acquisition. The consideration of the positive effects of longer exposure to a target language when implementing English learning in elementary schools was the main factor in supporting the decision. Likely, in their study of the effects of teaching English starting in the first grade on Arabic literacy skills, Aldosari and Alsultan (2017) support the decision since no observable harm to the skills of L1 (Arabic) was found when teaching English simultaneously in the early phases of L1 education. However, careful and sustainable language policy and planning are crucial both before and during the inclusion process (Alotaibi, 2014; Aldosari & Alsultan, 2017).

### III. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to develop a conceptual framework that suggests translanguaging as a teaching policy methodology that enhances English education, encourages bilingual practices, and promotes multilingualism in accordance with the inspired plan of modern Saudi Arabia.

Based on the review above, it can be argued that a remarkable and comprehensive change in language policymakers and planning in Saudi Arabia has occurred. At the macro level, Saudi language policy and planning have always been aligned with the economic, cultural, political, and educational objectives of the country (Alzumor, 2019). Still, despite a sort of cohesion evidenced in the language planning situation, there is a gap between language teaching objectives and the real outcomes and a call for problem-solving has been raised by several researchers. Additionally, the conflicts between language policy and the actual linguistic practices of speakers in classrooms need to be addressed. Thus, at the micro-level of language education, an urgent and inclusive reform in language education policy and planning is crucial. From our perspective, and based on this revision of various studies and papers in TEFL in Saudi contexts, educational reform is driven by both internal and external factors. Hence, bottom-up efforts must be accompanied by top-down planning and policy-making procedures.

In the Saudi context, translanguaging could be used as a new, explicit and well-defined approach for language learning in EFL classrooms. Researchers assert translanguaging as an effective strategy that promotes cooperative learning. As translanguaging in literacy challenges the notion of separated language learning, it freely allows students to integrate their linguistic resources, construct their social spaces, and reflect their multiple identities. In addition, it provides opportunities for students to use and develop their language skills in authentic contexts as found in their real daily interactions. Translanguaging contributes to what Elyas and Picard (2010) call "the hybridity of teacher and student identity" and "a hybrid English language pedagogy" that allows for the third space of English learning and practicing and promotes culturally suitable language pedagogy in the Saudi educational contexts. It also allows a "safe space" for bilingual students to practice their bilingualism and thereby benefit from their linguistic repertoire (Garcia & Li, 2013).

Through the translanguaging process, the teacher acts as a "co-learner" as described by Garc á and Kleifgen (2020), and thus allows more independence and autonomy for students, developing their confidence and motivation, and

increasing their engagement in activities. Such cooperative strategy enhances various social, cognitive, and communicative skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, meaning-making and negotiating (Albiladi, 2022). Moreover, various positive functions of translanguaging could be utilized in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia, especially in lower levels of proficiency including facilitating knowledge transmission and construction, promoting group work and discussion, and supporting classroom management. Furthermore, employing translanguaging also increases openness and tolerance towards other cultures among learners.

However, for developmental implications regarding English teaching and translanguaging implementation, several points must be considered by policymakers and decision-makers as well as practitioners in the field. These points would be useful both locally and internationally for TEFL and translanguaging applications as follows:

1. Practical and holistic educational reform on both macro- and micro-levels of language planning is necessary and crucial for the effective alignment of education with the country's inspiring vision and plans for successful openness and incorporation with the global culture and the international market.
2. Grassroots perspectives and concerns regarding language teaching and learning must be taken into consideration. Issues in language learning must be addressed by involving teachers, learners and their parents in the pedagogical choices and experiences. Policymakers must consider language education practices that work practically and are both individually and contextually preferred by people in the field. Regular local assessment of language education is critical not only to evaluate plans and identify weaknesses but also to shed light on the complexity of the process and explore valuable and preferable practices that could be utilized in language learning classes.
3. Ideology and attitudes about language, language learning and the teaching process must be at the center of the reform process. People in both school communities and the wider outside community should have adequate knowledge about the significance of language learning for contact and integration into modern societies and about the new trends and concepts in language learning such as translanguaging and other bilingual education practices. Pre- and in-service teachers must be exposed to, educated, and trained regarding bilingual different features and behaviors. Positive attitudes about bilingualism and multilingualism could be attained by raising awareness about its advantages and benefits for language learning. Additionally, increasing a sense of openness, acceptance and tolerance among language learners is important to achieve positive attitudes and motivation in language learners and their families. Gradually, this will help to reduce cultural concerns and language anxiety and minimize negative attitudes about foreign languages and bilingual practices.
4. On a parallel track, both mother tongue (Arabic) and target language (English) education must be well planned, carefully assessed and continually revised and treated. Equal support must be directed to both languages to promote positive bilingualism instead of the potential language deficiency or shift. During translanguaging implementation, caution needs to ensure that translanguaging does not end up with the dominance of one language over the other negatively. Thus, integrated efforts of language planners and teachers of both languages must be made to reach the best outcomes.
5. A clear and well-defined language policy, scientifically based and experimentally supported, must be documented and announced for people involved in language education, specifically the explicit role of L1 in L2 classrooms. As mentioned by Barnawi and Alhawsawi (2017), language policy in Saudi Arabia must be accessible and clear to address issues of internationalization of education and national cultural identity. Based on such declarations, each component in the language education system including learning objectives, curriculum, methodology, assessments, and teacher training must be revised and restructured in a reasonable and practical manner for successful implementation of newly recommended bilingual strategies including translanguaging.

From the points listed above, further research on translanguaging is needed in the Saudi context to support policymakers in developing a comprehensive framework for language learning that is in line with the national plan and the international expectations of the global market. Such studies will also contribute to language learning in similar contexts.

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