

Literary Review of Translanguaging, Translating, and Interpreting in Education

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Abstract

This paper covers literature on translanguaging, translating, and interpreting in education, primarily K-12 institutions. Translanguaging is defined by Dr. Josh Prada and its strengths are demonstrated in different contexts, including its use in the English as a New Language classroom. This study elucidates the value of translanguaging in the classroom since it offers opportunities for scaffolding and building confidence in English while encouraging English language learners (ELLs) to actively participate in the learning process and to feel more comfortable around peers and staff. Multilingualism is reviewed in the context of language choice in different social contexts to better understand the usefulness of translanguaging. Spanish and English literacy and their impact on native Spanish-speaking children is also explored in this paper which allows understanding of personal experience from ELLs. English-only policies are discussed and cautioned against due to the environment that is created by monolingualism. The importance of interpreters in schools is stressed because it has been determined to provide better educational outcomes for English Language Learners. The importance of translated written documents was covered in this study to better understand family involvement in education. Findings from this research include opportunities provided by translanguaging, the necessity of overcoming internalized biases, the harm of English-only policies, the importance of interpreters in schools, and the importance of translated documents/communications to strengthen family involvement.

Keywords: Translation, Interpretation, Translanguaging, Bilingualism, Monolingualism

Introduction

In this paper, I will review literature on translanguaging, interpreting, and translating in an educational context. I chose this topic because of my career in a large midwestern urban school district. I am the school's parent liaison, and it is my goal to involve the parents and families of students in their education and in the school community.

I am the only staff member in the school who speaks Spanish. The secretary calls me to the front office several times a day when a Spanish speaker is present or on the phone. Normally, it is a simple question or message, such as the student is ill and will not be in class that day. My coworkers are unable to communicate with Spanish speakers, and sometimes I think they do not want to learn how. However, their unwillingness

to learn is likely rooted in a lack of time and energy to dedicate to language learning.

How do these families feel at school? They can only communicate in their home language with one person in the entire building. When a teacher needs to communicate with a Spanish-speaking parent, they ask me to translate a document or letter, or they ask me to call a parent. One could argue that the language barrier reduces communication with these families, whether the communication is negative or positive.

In my research, I am going to explore the state of translanguaging and interpreting in schools. Translanguaging is defined as "using the two languages strategically to maximize communication to express a message" (Prada, 2019). While communication with families is very important in education, communication with students is important as well. I will explore methods of translanguaging in the classroom and in communi-

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nication with families. The majority of examples are based on native Spanish speakers who are learning English as a new language.

It is clear that transformative changes are necessary in the school system for English Language Learners (ELL). Some teachers use English-only policies that are destructive to the child's self-worth. These policies make the child feel unvalued and less-than, which is detrimental to the teacher-student relationship and will result in poor educational outcomes. Educators must welcome and celebrate different languages and cultures rather than pushing them aside. While some English as a New Language teachers use English-only policies because they themselves only speak English, these policies are incredibly alienating. We must allow our students to learn by translanguaging and providing scaffolding to build their confidence in English, which will result in the student feeling welcomed and valued.

Transformative teaching methods for English Language Learners include multilingual books, using the native language in writing, visual displays, notes in the native language, and bilingual dictionaries. These practices break away from the status quo of enforcing English-only policies. These practices will result in better educational outcomes, providing more equity between native English speakers and native speakers of other languages. The practices are easily applied to real-life educational settings.

Native Spanish Speakers and Translanguaging

Translanguaging means using the two languages strategically to maximize communication to express a message, meaning the two languages are an integrated system instead of two separate languages, as defined by Dr. Josh Prada in his article "Exploring the role of Translanguaging in Linguistic Ideological and Attitudinal Reconfigurations in the Spanish Classroom for Heritage Speakers." Another definition of translanguaging is "the multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (Garcia, 2009). The first language can be utilized to its full potential to adopt a fluid instead of a fixed notion of language (Kabir, 2019). The speaker uses characteristics of the two languages for the highest communication potential. This is also where we experience loan words between languages, such as *siesta* and *paella*.

English learners use translanguaging as a bridge between English and their native language. Translanguaging builds confidence when the speaker can use simple words and phrases in the new language; the

speaker can build the foundation of the new language when using the native language if they do not know the phrases or words in the new language (Prada, 2018). The practices of translanguaging in pedagogy will be discussed in this paper later on.

People also use translanguaging when a concept exists in one language and does not exist in the other. For example, there is an American woman who has visited Spain and wanted to explain characteristics of Spanish culture. She would not say that "My classmate is having a big party for her 15th birthday", she would say "My classmate is having a quinceanera." On the contrary, people use translanguaging to explain concepts in English as well. A girl in high school wouldn't say that "The boy asked me to the big dance for the 12th graders"; she would say "A boy asked me to the prom".

It is important to consider many perspectives when a native Spanish speaker is translanguaging. One must consider the population of Spanish speakers in the community. Does the speaker live in Miami, which has a majority Hispanic population, or in a small, white town in Ohio? Also, it is important to consider the context (casual or formal) and life experiences, such as level of education or socioeconomic status, as the social context and socioeconomic status may change the vernacular used in the exchange. Native speakers use translanguaging to give more meaning to interactions with language flexibility. Translanguaging allows the speaker to offer, obtain, process, and understand information.

The definition of translanguaging introduces the concepts of heteroglossia and diglossia "Heteroglossia means using the two languages in a flexible way; the barriers of which words and phrases are from one language, and which are from the other language do not exist" (Prada, 2018). Heteroglossia also transcends barriers of geography. The use of each language has no restrictions because the two languages are so integrated.

Diglossia means that the two languages are separate and are not used together (Prada, 2018). They are separate in the mind, and they are not integrated. Sadly, the idea of diglossia introduces a hierarchy of language. In the United States, many people believe that English is the superior language and Spanish is inferior. This belief stems from racism, white supremacy, and xenophobia. Some people think that native Spanish - the method that people speak casually, such as with family - is inferior because it is not in line with the standard. But, it is important to remember that this idea originates from raciolinguistics - people want them to "sound white"



when they speak English. While Spanish as the heritage language works perfectly in most situations, it is difficult for its speakers to enter the academic spheres. People who translanguage can learn to speak and write more “academically” to enter these academic spheres; in this case, translanguaging is a skill.

Translanguaging has a great influence on the language classroom. When the language is separate and an abstract entity, translanguaging cannot happen. The second language needs to be integrated into the classroom. For the sake of simplicity, I will discuss translanguaging in pedagogy in the context of native Spanish speakers learning English. The first point to consider is that the teacher needs to differentiate instruction for small groups or individual students; the “one size fits all” strategy is not effective in the English language classroom. It is important to ensure that students have prior knowledge and context to do class work. For example, a teacher at a higher-income magnet school could assign students to do research and write about college and career prospects that interest them. A staff member or classmate could explain that students at this particular school are expected to go to college, so they should research a career path that requires a college degree. Many authors encourage the idea of flexible language use in the classroom to ensure that students feel comfortable in class and with their peers. The use of flexible language can allow students to connect with the material in a more personal way. Also, translanguaging can strengthen relationships between classmates because they have the native language in common, and with language comes life experiences and culture. It is recommended to pair students who know more English with students who speak less English, and this practice is common in many academic contexts and subjects. One other point to consider is if local language factors, such as accents and vocabulary, should be used in the classroom. Some argue that local vernaculars are not up to standard; however, many academics argue against the idea of a language standard as it creates an unfair deficit framework (Harris & Schroeder, 2013). Awareness of regional accents and vocabulary increases language fluency.

In conclusion, it is important to have a definition of translanguaging and how to give context to this phenomenon. The author gives information on translanguaging in the context of pedagogy in the language classroom. We are reminded that raciolinguistics are present and create a hierarchy between the two languages, and it is important to view this phenomenon

without judgment and internalized racism (Prada, 2018). Translanguaging is a great method to build a bridge between the native language and the second language.

Multilingual Translanguaging in Different Social Contexts

Speakers use translanguaging differently in each social context. My research on this phenomenon is based on a study of a trilingual couple from China, as outlined in *Translanguaging and translation: The construction of social difference across city spaces*. (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). The husband is from China and the wife is from Malaysia, and they usually speak Mandarin. They speak Cantonese and English as well. The couple met when working together at a restaurant, and now they have three children. The couple owns a meat business in Birmingham, which is a “superdiverse” city. The couple uses translanguaging and translation in different areas in the city. This is a strategic use of the three languages that depends on the context and the participants in the interaction (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu). The authors analyze three recordings - a conversation at their business, a social conversation, and a conversation at home between husband and wife.

In this study, we see that interpreters are “social agents” who reflect and transfer information (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). This couple can find common ground with whom they would have not otherwise communicated. More people can connect with translanguaging because they can use their entire repertoire of communication (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). Speakers of different walks of life, ethnicities, genders, and more can connect when they translanguage. Translanguaging fills in the gaps in each language to communicate the entire message - all three languages are integrated into one large language repertoire for successful interaction (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

The methodology of this study consists of recordings at work (the meat stand), among friends, and at home. The authors explain the wife’s parents were visiting from Malaysia, and the couple spoke Cantonese with the parents. When the couple was at work, they usually spoke Mandarin, and they usually spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, or English to communicate with customers (Blackledge, Creese, & Hu, 2018).

The first recording was at the meat stand in town square. The husband and another cashier were at the booth, and the recording is an interaction between the



husband, the other cashier, and the customer. In the context of the stall or a store, people cross social lines to make the transaction. The two men made a judgment to decide which language to use, or would test all three languages to see which language succeeds in conversation. The customer asked the husband to translate the question to the other cashier, but the cashier understood the dialect of Chinese that the customer spoke. In the recording, the husband was more concerned about expressing the main idea of the message rather than the details (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu).

In the next recording, we listen to a conversation between the husband, the wife, and the other cashier. The conversation is about a birthday celebration for a friend. The other cashier expresses that while he wants to go to the party, he does not want to spend money on beers and a taxi. The group discusses the cultural differences between England and China with respect to the etiquette of celebrations. In this conversation, the other teller speaks in English. The wife speaks to the husband in Mandarin a few times to confirm that she understands English, which shows that she thinks the husband understands more English than she does. The husband uses colloquial phrases, and the couple uses English and Mandarin as an integrated system (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

The final recording takes place in the home. During the study, the wife's parents were visiting, and the couple spoke in Cantonese with the parents. The parents do not participate in this conversation, but are present during the interaction. The couple discuss the business and that they think some workers are lazy. The couple uses offensive words about white workers. While the words are racist, the couple does not feel bad about using these words because there are no white people in the vicinity. The couple speaks informally and they use sarcasm. There are no social lines in the house because the husband and wife are of the same social class as the in-laws, and they do not need to cross these lines (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

It is also important to consider how young people use translanguaging, as seen in "Translanguaging as a Boundary-Crossing Mechanism: A Turkish-American Youngster and her Linguistic Negotiation of Three Discursive Spaces" (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). This study reviews a young girl around age six and her experiences in translanguaging at home, her Turkish-language heritage school, and her mainstream school. The authors state that her family valued the girl's multilingualism and wanted to preserve her knowledge of the Turkish

language, so they spoke Turkish at home and sent her to a Turkish heritage school on Sunday afternoons. The child was born in Hong Kong and had Hong Kong citizenship, so they also valued her knowledge of Cantonese. Her mainstream school was fairly diverse, but the teacher had little knowledge of the Turkish language and culture, based on a teacher interview. The teachers at the heritage school spoke both English and Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

One of the findings the authors found was the difference in language use by the adults in her life. Her parents only used Turkish at home, aside from using English to help the girl with homework (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her teacher at school used English most of the time, aside from occasional Spanish with some Spanish-speaking students (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The teachers at the heritage school spoke both English and Turkish in order to facilitate understanding between students of varying language proficiencies (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Based on these findings, we can conclude that her teachers at the Turkish heritage school were using translanguaging to allow for a broader repertoire of communication.

Another finding from the study was the difference in language use by her peers in these three different places- home, the heritage school, and her mainstream school. Her peers at home were the children of family friends who also spoke Turkish, so these interactions were almost entirely in Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her peers at her mainstream school spoke almost entirely English, aside from occasional Spanish conversations with Spanish-speaking peers. In an interview, the girl noted two experiences of speaking Turkish at school- once when she met another Turkish-speaking student, and once when she was teaching a peer a few words in Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her peers used translanguaging frequently at the heritage school in order to accurately convey messages between students of varying language proficiencies (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The teachers at the heritage school supported translanguaging so they could embrace both parts of their identity and widen their community (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

Another finding to consider is the boundaries between these three locations. The girl could easily transition between home and the heritage school because Turkish could be spoken at both places, but the transition from home to her mainstream school was incredibly difficult (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The transition from the heritage school to the mainstream school was



not as difficult because English was spoken in both places, but the girl was able to translanguage at the heritage school, which was not an option at her mainstream school (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

In conclusion, the couple uses translanguaging as a very important resource in the business and with the family (Blackledge, Creese, & Hu, 2018) and in the young Turkish girl's experience in navigating home, her mainstream school, and her heritage school (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The husband and the other cashier use translanguaging with customers at the meat stand, and they use translanguaging in social situations as well. They decide which language to use strategically depending on the context, and they can mix the three languages to get the message across, along with using the same strategy with the wife's parents (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). The young Turkish girl decides which language to use with different people in her life (parents vs. teachers, peers at the heritage school vs. peers at her mainstream school, etc.). This study shows that people communicate more effectively when they use their entire repertoire to communicate with different people in different situations strategically.

Latinx Childrens' Use of Translanguaging

Many Latinx students have an internal conflict between English and Spanish, and have compartmentalized English for use during the school day and Spanish for use at home (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The authors of *Latinx Children's Push and Pull of Spanish Literacy and Translanguaging* explain that schools have "English-only" policies because state tests are only in English, and funding for schools depends on state test scores. The pedagogy only focuses on phonics and grammar, which does not allow analysis, synthesis, and higher order thinking (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

Unfortunately, these children often do not learn to read and write in Spanish, and sometimes they lose their Spanish. When students lose their Spanish, they lose a rich culture and family connections. Sadly, schools see Spanish as a problem rather than a magnificent resource. Many schools force Latinx students to take very basic classes (possibly because students do not earn high scores on state tests, because the test is in English), and students are not prepared for higher education (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). Another hypothesis is that schools see Spanish as a language of the lower social class, and they think that Spanish speakers are not intelligent, so they have a deficit.

Many of these students do not feel comfortable in class and rarely participate (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

We can investigate Latinx childrens' use of translanguaging by reading a study that takes place in a private tutoring program during May and June 2017, as outlined in *Latinx Children's Push and Pull of Spanish Literacy and Translanguaging* (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The students in this program were there because they were struggling in school, particularly in reading and writing. Fifteen student teachers worked with 19 children for an hour and a half in the afternoons, and then the college students had a literacy class in the evenings. College students would help children write in English, in Spanish, and in translanguaging. All of the students were in grades kindergarten through eight, and did not learn Spanish literacy in school.

The data from the study was based on interviews with the children. The study authors would ask questions about experiences with the tutoring program and experiences with Spanish at school. The students liked the opportunity to write in Spanish because they never had the opportunity to write in Spanish at school (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). In the interviews, many children talked about state tests, and they were not permitted to answer the questions in Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). Some children said that writing in Spanish was too difficult and they could not do it, because they had not had formal instruction to write in Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

Some children were confused by translanguaging because of "bracketing" - the separation between English and Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The children understood that Spanish was at home, and English was at school. However, the students did not realize that they had been translanguaging for a lifetime with their families and in the community. For example, many of the children had been translating for their parents for many years. One student felt that translanguaging was like "Spanglish" with a pouting face - my thought is that she has an internalized dislike of Spanish, which is based on racism and the hierarchy between English and Spanish. However, the faculty at the tutoring center worked very hard to create positive associations with Spanish and translanguaging. For example, the center had a Mother's Day card making activity in May, and the messages within the cards were in Spanish. The children enjoyed this activity because their language and culture were respected and cele-



brated. College students switched between English and Spanish to show that the two languages are important. The center acted as a “third place” between home and school, a place to experience and learn.

In conclusion, the study shows that bilingual children have internalized racism because schools only value English. Schools only value English because state tests are often only in English, and school funding is based on state test scores. If there were not any government pressure and testing, schools could teach Spanish literacy to support English literacy. Perhaps states like Texas and California need to consider different policies to preserve Spanish instead of its erasure.

Translanguaging in Practice and Its Shifts in Ideologies

Unfortunately, there are some educators who do not allow native language in the classroom. We learn more about the benefits of linguistic diversity in the classroom from a study on eight schools that choose to introduce the project “City University New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals” [CUNYSIEB] (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). The CUNYSIEB faculty introduced the concept of translanguaging to the faculty of the eight schools during professional development meetings, and asked them to allow students to use the entire linguistic repertoire in class flexibly and strategically within translanguaging pedagogy. This request caused a change of mind and changed monolingual practices in schools (Menken & Sanchez, 2019).

To give context, some teachers spoke Spanish, but some native languages of the students were not spoken by the teachers. The teachers slowly introduced new practices of translanguaging pedagogy. For example, a practice of translanguaging in the classroom is to put students in pairs and small groups. Translanguaging offered opportunities for scaffolding in partner/small group conversations. The multilingual practices included multilingual books, using the native language in writing, visual displays, notes in the native language, and bilingual dictionaries.

The schools had many changes of ideology about the language. Teachers no longer acted like the “English police,” which developed a schoolwide belief in translanguaging. The schools no longer see the native language as a deficit, but as an advantage (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). Translanguaging is a very useful resource even when the teacher does not speak the native language of the student.

The study shows that it is important to see the

bilingual student holistically. In the past, educators in the school district did not consider the native language’s grammar and sentence structure (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). With translanguaging, teachers can view the language, culture, and history of students more favorably and with context. According to the study, translanguaging eliminates language hierarchies, because languages are woven together and are not separated. The students participated more in class and felt like a part of the school community. The students understood the class topics more thoroughly and had more control over their learning.

As a result of this project (CUNYSIEB), the districts enacted new education policies. Five of the eight schools created bilingual programs, and three schools created transitional bilingual programs. Some schools created classes that are entirely in Spanish. The study authors pointed out that developing the native language supports the development of English. One problem with bilingual education is that it is difficult to staff bilingual teachers. Another problem with bilingual education is that it can separate the two languages, but the study schools are using translanguaging to prevent the separation (Menken & Sanchez, 2019).

In my research, I found it important to include findings from “(Re)imagining the Future of Translanguaging in Pedagogies in TESOL Through Teacher-Researcher Collaboration” from Shepard-Carey and Tian, 2020. This article highlights teacher and researcher collaboration to mobilize and sustain translanguaging pedagogies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, or TESOL. The two researchers paired up with a local English instructor to build a collaborative partnership to create effective translanguaging strategies to ensure higher educational outcomes.

Researcher Tian built a partnership with a former classmate who taught an intensive English course at a university (pseudonym Ms. Davidson). When outlining their goals, Ms. Davidson explained that translanguaging had been a “hidden” practice in her classroom via online bilingual dictionaries and students resorting to their native language in small group discussions (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Ms. Davidson wanted to learn ways to leverage those multilingual resources in her teaching (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Tian and Davidson created translanguaging activities in their classroom based on course goals and learner backgrounds, “such as comparing and contrasting semantic and cultural use of language in context (e.g., idioms and language in mass media) and culturally relevant figures’



role play” (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). One challenge they faced was student resistance to use the native language due to the hidden curriculum of immersion being the only way to learn a language, so Tian and Davidson held open discussions about native languages and their relation to English (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Tian and Davidson found that translanguaging pedagogies significantly increased learner comprehension, metalinguistic awareness, and comfort level with using English (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020).

Researcher Shepard-Carey worked with her former co-teacher, pseudonym Ms. Hassan. While Shepard-Carey had a stronger background in pedagogy, Ms. Hassan identified as an immigrant and spoke Somali, the native language of many of her students; her background provided knowledge and experience that was beneficial to the classroom (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). They both had to confront some internalized biases; both teachers had been taught to use English-only policies in the classroom, but their collaboration allowed for more opportunities for students to use translanguaging in the classroom (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). For example, the co-teachers used a multilingual morning meeting routine that lasted all year (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Since the students were translanguaging, they were able to create deeper connections between their native language and English for better understanding (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020).

In conclusion, the CUNYSIEB project created a more positive view of bilingual students and their cultures and histories. This project led to more researchers and educators to use translanguaging in the classroom, as seen in Shepard-Carey and Tian’s work. The project went beyond pedagogy practices and created a change in ideology. It is important to remember that teachers need to believe in translanguaging to teach with these practices, and it is a reminder that English is no better than any other language (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). Some students may meet translanguaging with resistance, but with open communication and encouragement, students can benefit greatly from translanguaging. Small changes can create a change in ideology, and it can make a big change in the school and community.

The Importance of Interpreters in Schools

We must also consider the importance of interpreters in schools for families who speak languages other than English. “Bridging the Latino Achievement Gap: The Importance of Interpreters In Schools” by Rachel R. Williams of University of Kentucky offers perspective

based on real experiences in public schools. The author begins with the notion that schools generally fail to understand and accommodate languages and cultures other than English and American. Sometimes there are conflicts between students and adults in school due to a lack of understanding of their culture and language (Williams, 2016). But, there is a large communication barrier between the families that only speak Spanish and the schools that only communicate in English (Williams, 2016). Studies show that there is a correlation between family involvement in education and student success.

What are the advantages of family participation in education? According to the author, students are much more successful when their families are involved in the school versus not being involved in the school. The first advantage is that students are more engaged in the classroom. The second advantage is that students are more motivated. The third advantage is that students have higher levels of control and competence, and more effective self-control and goal orientation. All of these advantages lead to higher outcomes of student success (Williams, 2016).

Why are these students more successful? The author writes that students feel more comfortable in school. These students are often “high-achieving” due to intellect or “high-achieving” because they have help and support in education. These students often take advanced classes and feel happy and confident (Williams, 2016).

Parents who are Spanish speakers have many disadvantages in education, primarily in regards to communication. It is difficult for these parents to help with homework because they do not understand directions and content. It is important to consider that some parents have not had much education, and many did not graduate from high school. The largest barrier is that parents cannot communicate with school personnel. Children are often “language brokers”, or interpreters for their parents (Rossato, 2010). These situations when the child needs to interpret give children a lot of stress; also, there is a limit to the complexity and potential of the communication because the child does not understand the subject, or the vocabulary is too advanced (Rossato, 2010). When children are interpreting for parents, it is not possible to determine the accuracy of communication, which could lead to misunderstandings.

Williams (2016) coordinated a study on parent and family involvement in education. A bilingual and Latino



interviewer asked the children about their attitude about education, such as “How do you feel about math?” and “What subjects do you like?” The interviewer asked parents about their experiences and attitudes about school. 58% of parents said they were confident in their ability to communicate with their child’s teacher, and 42% said they were not confident in communicating with their child’s teacher. 78% of the 42% said they had access to an interpreter, and 22% did not have access to an interpreter.

Another aspect of this study was about conversations between school staff and parents. The researcher concluded that it is very necessary to have an interpreter during these conversations to maximize communication. The presence of an interpreter increases the pace of communication, the level of communication, and the levels of trust between the two parties. It is imperative that the interpreter and staff work together to maximize communication with parents.

Communication flow between parents and school staff has a positive correlation with monitoring student achievement, such as looking at grades in PowerSchool (Williams, 2016). Parents with adequate communication can help with homework and support students when they need it. There is more frequent contact between parents and the school, and these conversations are of a higher caliber. However, communication is not a factor in how much the family values education. All families want their students to be successful academically, but sometimes they are unsure of how to help. It is very difficult to help with homework and communicate with the school when they do not speak the same language and there is no interpreter.

It is unlikely that a child can understand complicated documents like these, especially in their second language. Documents need to be in Spanish, or the office needs to provide an interpreter. It is not the child’s responsibility to translate documents or for other adults. The content of such documents is often too complicated for the child to understand. Sometimes the subject matter is not appropriate, such as details of a divorce or medical forms regarding reproductive health.

In conclusion, all families want to support their children, and they want children to be successful in their education. But, it is very difficult to help the child with homework when the parent does not speak the same language. It is important that interpreters work together with school staff to ensure that parents who are Spanish speakers have the same quality of service and communication as parents who are English

speakers. Families and schools are a team, and the goal is the child’s success.

Translations in School Communication

It is also imperative to discuss the responsibility of schools to communicate with all families. Stephanie Fordice, former communications coordinator for Cook County Schools in Illinois, offers strategies to ensure effective communications for all families. Fordice’s article “At the Corner of Diversity and Communication” gives many suggestions for schools and school districts. The first suggestion is to ensure that the translations are accurate and readily available and it is also recommended to have an interpreter at all school events so all families can communicate and feel comfortable (Fordice, 2014). All schools and the district office need an interpreter in the building to answer questions in a timely manner, and all documents and publications (newsletters, calendars, etc.) need a translation; of course, these translations need to go to the correct students. One simple strategy is to make bilingual copies with English on one side and the second language on the other side. The author compares the translations to differentiated instruction because all families need different supports. It is important to consider the format of the documents as well, as some languages read right to left instead of left to right (Fordice, 2014).

It is also important to ensure that these documents and publications are on paper and online, since some families do not have the technology or access to the Internet (Fordice, 2014). When furthering my research in school communication, I came across the article “The Roles of the Online Environment in School-Family Communication” by Otilia Clipa, faculty member of Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava. In Clipa’s findings, we discover that 80% of parents feel that online communication would strengthen the relationship between the school and the family, along with 76% of teachers. If the school decides to have information on the website or social media, the platform needs to have a function that translates the content into other languages, and it is important that the translation is correct (Fordice, 2014). Some schools and districts post videos, so they need captions available in the needed language (Fordice, 2014). In personal experience, many schools use Blackboard Connect, a service that broadcasts phone messages, text messages, and emails to families. These communications are fairly easy to translate into the needed language.



Another important idea is to have a school liaison who is bilingual so the parents and families can communicate with at least one staff member at the school (Fordice, 2014). The liaison focuses on communication with families and community partners. The liaison considers all factors that prevent parent and family involvement, such as transportation and language barriers. The author's research was based on a school in Chicago that has two family liaisons (one bilingual) because family involvement has a positive correlation with student success. It is also important that these liaisons and other school staff members are competent in internet and social media usage (Clipa, 2019).

Conclusion

Students learning English as a new language could have more success if school staff members change their ideologies and confront their internalized biases. Translanguaging allows students to access their entire repertoire of communication to fully communicate a message, along with allowing students to scaffold as they build confidence in English. It is imperative to celebrate progress instead of showing disappointment when a child's attempt in English is not quite correct; many children would shut down and feel very embarrassed in that instance. When teachers enforce "English-only" policies, this destroys the student-teacher relationship, which is detrimental to student success. Students need to know they are safe and valued at school for authentic learning to take place and have positive educational outcomes. Staff members could show a genuine interest in the child's culture and learn more by speaking with the child and doing research.

In order to improve communication with families, one of the simplest strategies is to print school documents in English on one side and Spanish on the other. That way, it is ensured that families who need the the document in Spanish will have it. Another strategy is to hire an interpreter whose sole duty is to communicate with families during meetings or other school events. The interpreter could also make phone calls and write correspondence in the needed language to improve communication and remove any barriers.

It is imperative to value diversity instead of viewing it as a burden. As educators, we are doing ourselves a disservice when we do not value a child's background and language. It is our job to ensure each child has what they need to be successful, and a child whose first language is not English should have the same opportunities as a child who is a native English speaker. These barriers need to be removed to ensure equity in school and beyond.



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