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## About the Journal

The *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (IJLCLE)* is an open-source peer-reviewed international journal dedicated to publishing research in the field of literacy, culture, and language education from multi- inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives. Its mission is twofold: (1) to promote exchange of ideas and dissemination of research, and (2) to facilitate academic exchange between scholars from diverse fields of study worldwide. Authors are invited to submit manuscripts describing scholarly research on a wide range of topics related to language, literacy and culture in education. (ISSN: 2642-4002)

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## Focus and Scope

The *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (IJLCLE)* is multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary and focuses on all aspects of language, literacy and culture in education worldwide. Theoretical and conceptual study, empirical and applied research using qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies, critical papers, special issues and book reviews are all invited. Contributions from a host of disciplines such as sociolinguistics, sociology of language, psycholinguistics, educational linguistics, applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, raciolinguistics, literacy studies, cultural studies, language and gender studies, language and political economy, media and technology, language education, teacher education, educational policy, semiotics, pragmatics, language policy and planning, language revitalization, and linguistic landscapes are very welcome. The intended audience of *IJLCLE* is researchers, scholars, educators, and graduate students from around the world.

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## Introduction

Serafín M. Coronel-Molina

The *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (IJLCLE)* is an open-source, peer-reviewed international journal dedicated to publishing research in the field of literacy, culture, and language education from multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary perspectives. Its mission is to promote the academic exchange of ideas and dissemination of research among scholars and researchers from diverse fields of study worldwide. Authors are invited to submit manuscripts describing scholarly research on a wide range of topics related to language, literacy, and culture in education. Theoretical and conceptual studies, empirical and applied research using qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies, critical papers, special issues, and book reviews are all invited. Contributions from a host of disciplines such as sociolinguistics, sociology of language, psycholinguistics, educational linguistics, applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, raciolinguistics, literacy studies, cultural studies, language and gender studies, language and political economy, media and technology, language education, teacher education, educational policy, semiotics, pragmatics, language policy and planning, language revitalization, and linguistic landscapes are very welcome. The intended audience of *IJLCLE* is researchers, scholars, educators, and graduate students from around the world.

This third volume contains four articles and three book reviews chosen from an array of submissions for our 2022 publication. The first article, titled “Parental Involvement in Children’s Initial Literacy Learning in Primary Schools in Mungwi District, Zambia” was written by Maureen C. Kasakula, who investigates the kinds of things primary schools are doing to involve parents in their children’s literacy learning. Through her qualitative study, she discovered that it took the involvement of partner organizations such as Read to Succeed to bring schools and parents together to enable the latter to actively participate in their children’s initial literacy learning. Kasakula feels it is important to include the development of parental involvement in teacher education to make up-and-coming teachers aware of the importance of this before they ever teach in a classroom, as well as embedding parental involvement in the primary schools’ curricula.

The second article, “*Construyendo Puentes: Translanguaging in Community Literacy Spaces*,” by Laura Beth Kelly, Stephanie Abraham, Kate Kedley and Cinthya Bolanos, examines two community bilingual Spanish–English literacy projects, comparing how each of them eventually developed a turn towards translanguaging and how this translanguaging operated at each of the sites. They discovered practices such as mirroring community language practices and creating inclusive, participatory environments. They also detail the limitations of translanguaging, such as its limited ability to resist the dominance of English, especially in the face of high staff and participant turnover.

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The third article, “An Empirical Study on Syllabus Design and English Language Teaching at Calicut University,” by Jithin Devassy, attempts to evaluate the communicative approach to English language education in Kerala through the “Four Skills of Communication” course, as seen from students’ and teachers’ point of view. This is an empirical study, observing the development of learners’ language skills of learners and examining the positive and negative aspects of the course’s syllabus and textbook. It is hoped that this study will provide useful feedback for course and textbook developers to establish whether the course and the syllabus are successful at improving students’ proficiency in English.”

The fourth and final article, “Shadow ESL Education from North American Tutors’ Perspective: Are We Real Teachers?” by Emily L. Kerr explores the practices and beliefs of two language tutors who work with for-profit, private tutoring services to determine their own self-identity as educators. Given that many of them, while “experts” in their subject matter, have little or no formal training in education, they often doubt their own professional identity. These explorations led to questions of “who has the privilege of being called a ‘teacher’ and the status of online for-profit tutors as compared to classroom teachers.”

This third volume of *IJLCLE* ends with three book reviews. The first review is by Melody Lynch-Kimery of the book titled *Refugees in Canada: On the Loss of Social and Cultural Capital* by Thomas Ricento; the second is by Suok Kwon of the book titled *Translanguaging in Multilingual English Classrooms: An Asian Perspective and Contexts* by Viniti Vaish; and the third is by C. Martín Vélez Salas of the book titled *Decolonizing Foreign Language Education: The Misteaching of English and Other Colonial Languages* by Donaldo Macedo.

## Acknowledgments

*IJLCLE* is a project very near and dear to my heart. I have invested an immense amount of time and effort in marketing the journal consistently through multiple social media and professional networks, updating the blind reviewers’ evaluation guidelines, and identifying and inviting members to expand the Editorial Board. Despite the fact that I have also devoted a great amount of time in finding and editing the three book reviewers and supervising the blind review process by identifying and contacting some reviewers and taking care of the entire production process by formatting and editing the whole content of this volume in close communication with the respective authors, among other things, I could not have done it alone.

My special thanks go to Ebrahim Bamanger for accepting to join the *IJLCLE* Editorial Team. Ebrahim provided invaluable assistance in his role as Managing Editor. In close coordination with me, he has been in communication with the authors who submitted their papers through the *IJLCLE* online platform. Ebrahim also identified blind reviewers for the papers, and he sent the acceptance and rejection letters to the authors. In addition, he updated the content of the *IJLCLE* website from time to time. He also reformulated the system of messaging to be sent to authors, editors, and reviewers. Ebrahim also started indexing the journal, but more volumes need to be published to solidify this process.

Many thanks to Joanne Yi, who edited in detail two of the articles included in this volume. Joanne’s editorial assistance was instrumental in improving the structure, language, and content of those two articles. Thank you also to Amani Gashan who copy-edited another article included in the present volume.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to institutions, friends, colleagues, and social media venues from Indiana University and from around the world for their help in publicizing the *IJLCLE* website and

the Call for Papers locally and globally. I am also deeply grateful to my colleagues in the Literacy, Culture, and Language Education Program, Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education at Indiana University, and colleagues from around the world for accepting my invitation and agreeing to serve on the Editorial Board.

I am profoundly grateful to all the contributors to this volume for choosing *IJLCLE* to publish their work. My deepest gratitude also goes to IUScholarWorks for hosting the *IJLCLE* website and for supporting this new publication venue through their online platform. Last but not least, my profound thanks also go to the blind reviewers for their detailed and rigorous feedback, which led to a rich, insightful exchange with the authors. Without the generous assistance of all these fine people and institutions, *IJLCLE* would never have become a reality, and this volume before you would never have seen light of day.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



## Parental Involvement in Children’s Initial Literacy Learning in Primary Schools in Mungwi District, Zambia

Maureen C. Kasakula

### Abstract

This study sought to establish what primary schools were doing to ensure that there was parental involvement in children’s literacy learning. A qualitative design methodology was utilized, and data was collected through interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions. The study found that parental involvement in children’s initial literacy learning in many schools was only achieved through the strategies put in place by some cooperating partners working with the schools such as Read to Succeed, a nongovernmental organization supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The strategies put in place by these partners enabled teachers and parents to work together so that parents were able to actively get involved in their children’s initial literacy learning. The study recommends that teacher education seriously consider including components on parental involvement in the college literacy syllabus to enhance teachers’ involvement of parents in children’s initial literacy learning in primary schools. The study further recommends that parental involvement in children’s literacy learning should be embedded in the school curriculum to enhance the commitment of teachers and school administrators.

**Keywords:** parental involvement, initial literacy, learning, primary schools, children

### Introduction

Research has shown that educational success has its foundation in the literacy abilities of learners (Gove & Cvelich, 2011). Literacy provides access to personal enrichment through literature, culture, and social interaction (MESVTEE, 2013). Well-cultivated literacy abilities are critical in the development of other intellectual and social domains in children (Dearing et al., 2006). Research on education and economics has also revealed that the degree of learner achievement has a direct link to a country’s economic growth. For example, Hanusheck and Woessman (2009), in their study titled “The Role of Cognitive Skills in Economic Development,” found that a percent increase in learners’

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attainment of basic literacy skills translated into a 0.3 percentage point increase in annual growth rate of a country's economy. De Beer (2004) also suggested that for the sake of one's future, development and cultivation of a comprehensive literacy that enables people to perform necessary skills and live full and meaningful lives is what is desperately needed. This is the case for Zambia, whose literacy attainment levels have in the past gone down, as recent study reports show that many children exit primary education without acquiring basic literacy skills to enhance their productivity on the labor market (MESVTEE, 2013; SRNDP, 2014).

In the Grade 5 National Assessment Survey of 2006 and 2008, reading achievements were below 40% in both English and Zambian languages (35.3% and 39.4% respectively). Another Grade 5 National Assessment Survey and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Survey for 2010 also showed poor reading and writing abilities among learners. Equally, the South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ III) of 2010 noted that among Grade 6 learners that were tested in reading, only 27.4% were able to read at a basic competency level (MESVTEE, 2013). Although these studies did not focus on lower primary grades, the results could be a reflection of poor foundation in the early grades. In support of this, a 2012 pilot study on the EGRA also found that about 90% of second graders tested were not able to read or recognise a single word, even in their mother tongue (SRNDP, 2014). This is not without a number of interventions, such as the primary reading program through which the New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) was introduced in a bid to help children learn to read fluently and write easily and accurately in a local language. The NBTL course was followed by a course that was termed Step into English (SITE) and was aimed at helping learners to read and write in English in the second grade. This was followed by a course called Read on Course (ROC) which was meant to consolidate the reading and writing skills acquired in the first grade in Zambian languages and second grade in English. However, despite these and other interventions, such as Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs that teachers undertake at school level and other higher institutions of learning, there has been no significant improvement in reading, as attested to in the recent studies (Banda, 2012; Folotiya-Jere et al., 2014; Matafwali, 2010; Mubanga, 2012; Mwanza, 2012).

In 2013, the Ministry of Education noted with concern that one of the reasons learners were failing to learn content materials is that many were not able to read and write (MESVTEE, 2013). The Ministry acknowledges that literacy is a tool that society uses in "social, economic and political development" (MESVTEE, 2013, p.18). This is why literacy is one of the key competencies and core learning areas of the curriculum aimed at building a foundation for further learning (MESVTEE, 2013). However, teachers alone cannot achieve this task. Parents may need to support their children. To do this, they may need some encouragement and guidance from primary schools.

Some related studies include a study by Kangombe (2013) which focused on home-school partnerships that facilitated literacy development—in particular, strategies or techniques teachers used to partner with parents to help develop the literacy skills of pupils in the fifth and seventh grades in Lusaka's high-density area. While Kangombe's study looked at home-school partnerships that facilitated literacy development in the upper primary grades in an urban district, this study focused on what primary schools were doing to ensure that there was parental involvement (PI) in children's initial literacy learning in the preparatory grades (grades 1–4) in a rural district. A study by Kabali (2014) focused on the role of the home environment in the acquisition of reading skills in Zambia. This study, however, focused on what primary schools were doing to ensure that there was PI in children's initial literacy learning. Other studies that linked literacy to home environment had a bias on emergent literacy (Kaunda, 2013; Musonda, 2011; Zimba, 2012). While the previous studies reviewed the potential of home environment in enhancing literacy skills and thus provided a basis for PI in

children's initial literacy learning, this research sought to extend past research by focusing on what primary schools were doing to ensure that parents were involved in children's initial literacy learning in primary schools.

## **Related Literature**

### **Parental Involvement and Literacy Success**

PI is one of the support strategies that can enhance literacy achievement in school-going children. According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2007), parents and families are responsible for supporting literacy because they influence children's performance by modeling, providing emotional attachment to learning, and enhancing learning achievement. For example, when parents read to their children, they help them appreciate the value of reading and encourage them to learn how to read so that they can become independent readers. Bonci et al. (2010) observed that the family and the home environment have a powerful impact on children's educational achievement, especially in language and literacy development. A study by Enemuoh & Obidike (2013) in Nigeria also reviewed those activities in which parents engage their children on a daily basis help them build their understanding of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Harris and Goodall (2007) also observed that there is a strong relationship between PI in learning activities at home and children's cognitive achievement, particularly in the early years. However, a study by Murungi et al. (2014) in Kenya found that schools were not making enough efforts to involve parents in children's literacy learning.

### **Teachers as Initiators of Parental Involvement in Children's Literacy Learning**

Successful PI in children's initial literacy learning is largely dependent on teachers who form the link between parents and schools (Goodall et al., 2011; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). However, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) argued that "Schools and their teachers are not the only sources with potential to nurture or inhibit fruitful connections between parents and teachers. Children could well play a dynamic role in this process as they are known to do in other aspects of their experience and development" (p. 46). While it is true that children have the potential to nurture or inhibit fruitful connections between parents and teachers, school-related actions of children are largely dependent on what teachers do to prepare children to work with parents. Glasgow and Whitney (2009) also stated that how much parents get involved in children's learning is dependent on how often schools reach out to parents. This may suggest that schools have a mandate to devise ways that enhance PI in children's learning; for instance, Lumpkin (2010) suggested that it may be effective for schools to conduct regular orientation sessions with parents during which teachers can explain to the parents how they can provide meaningful support to their children. Consistent with this, Adelman and Taylor (2007) argued that meaningful involvement of parents requires specialized expertise without which there can be no meaningful involvement. However, schools must play a role to enhance it. Therefore, this study sought to establish what roles schools play in enhancing such involvements by parents.

### **Parental Involvement and Teacher Training**

Although successful PI in children's initial literacy learning is largely dependent on teachers, the ability of the teachers to support effective involvement of parents is dependent on their understanding of the context and the processes of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). This may suggest that teachers on their own without undergoing any training may not know how to effectively involve parents in children's literacy teaching (Agronick et al., 2009). They may require training and coaching, especially when working with parents whose background is different from theirs (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010). A study by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) revealed that the reason family involvement

programs were often not fully implemented was a lack of staff training in skills related to working with families. Therefore, this study sought to establish if teachers had access to training on PI in literacy learning.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) proposed a model of parental involvement process which tries to answer three essential questions: (1) why parents become involved in their children's learning, (2) what parents do when they are involved, and (3) how parents' involvement makes a positive contribution to learners' success (The Parent Institute, 2012).

The model is divided into five levels. Level 1 of the PI process addresses factors that motivate parents to be involved in their children's education. This level is subdivided into another level (1.5), which brings out the forms of involvement that parents may choose to be involved in. Level 2 looks at learning mechanisms that parents engage in during their involvement in their children's learning. Level 3 focuses on how learners perceive their parents' involvement in their education/learning activities while Level 4 addresses important learning outcomes that are influenced by parents' involvement in their learning. Level 5 looks at learner achievement, the result of PI in learning. According to this model, these factors complement each other to determine the form and frequency of PI in children's education (The Parent Institute, 2012). Although this is the case, the focus of this study is on how each of these may work as a single entity to influence parents' involvement in their children's initial literacy learning, without disputing the idea that each of these is affected by the other. Of particular interest to this study was Level 1, which comprises three major constructs that motivate parents to be involved. These are (1) parents' construction of their parental role in their children's learning, (2) parents' sense of self-efficacy for helping the child to succeed in school, and (3) general invitations, opportunities, and demands for PI presented by the child, the teachers and the child's school.

### **Parents' Construction of Their Parental Role**

According to the model, the parents' decision to be involved in their children's learning is dependent on what they believe to be their role in their child's education and progress (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Thus, the more the school makes parents understand their role in their children's learning, the more successful PI in children's learning becomes. This means that perceptions that parents have about their children's learning would seem to be the most important aspects that influence parents to be involved in children's education. This has implications on what schools should do to ensure there is PI in children's initial literacy learning.

### **Parents' Sense of Self-Efficacy**

Parents' self-efficacy for helping their child to succeed in education is concerned with whether parents believe that their involvement can bring positive outcomes in their child's learning. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) described self-efficacy as the extent to which an individual is able to make a difference. However, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) explain that "Self-efficacy beliefs are concerned not with skills" (p. 18) "but with beliefs about what one can do with the sub skills that one possesses" (Bandura, 1986a, p. 368). This means that, although parents might have skills and potential to influence children's learning, as has already been established in earlier studies (Kabali, 2014; Kaunda, 2013; Zimba, 2012), beliefs held by parents on their ability to help improve children's literacy outcomes is what would determine their decision to be involved and has implications on what schools should do.

### **Invitations, Demands and Opportunities Presented by the Child and the Child's School**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of PI posits that opportunities, invitations, and demands made by the child and the child's school are the factors that influence parents to be involved in their child's learning. In their revised 2005 model, level 1 addresses the need for schools to welcome and respect parents, with the aim of helping to motivate them to get involved in their children's learning, helping them feel invited to participate, and respecting the factors that affect PI in children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The child's school, as well as the child himself or herself, ought to invite their parents to be involved in their literacy learning. Equally, the school environment must be inviting, and teachers' behavior should be welcoming and facilitative for PI (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This is significant in establishing how primary schools ensure that there is PI in children's initial literacy learning. While the study is on literacy learning, the theoretical framework is on learning in general and, therefore, makes it more informative than the case could have been if it was limited to literacy learning alone.

### **Methods**

The purpose of the study was to establish what primary schools were doing to ensure that parents were involved in their children's initial literacy learning in primary schools. To achieve this, multiple sources of data were used (Tracy, 2010), as is typical in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). This included interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, all of which enhanced triangulation, which in turn helped the researcher to compare and cross check results for consistency (Patton, 1990) and fair interpretation of the results (Pacho, 2015). The main questions addressed in this study were:

1. How do primary schools ensure that parents have opportunities for involvement in their children's initial literacy learning?
2. What aspects of the primary teacher training literacy syllabus are aimed at addressing how teachers can involve parents in their children's literacy learning?

### **Study Sample/Sampling**

The sample for the study was conveniently drawn, as the researcher wanted two urban and two rural schools that were within and beyond the radius of 12 kilometers from the District Education Board Secretary's (DEBS) office respectively. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants. At the school level, four teachers teaching Grades 1–4 were chosen, and ten grades 3–4 children were included in the sample, together with head teachers of each of the selected schools. This translated into 16 teachers, 40 pupils and 4 head teachers in the study. The study also included two standard officers from the District Education and the Provincial Education offices respectively. One District Resource Center Coordinator (DRCC), one Provincial Resource Center Coordinator (PRCC), and a Head of Department (HOD) in teaching language and literacy in one primary College of Education were also part of the study. This brought the number of participants from teacher education to three. Two parents from the Parent–Teachers' Association (PTA) top leadership positions and eight parents of pupils in Grades 1–4 were included in the sample. The choice of parents was based on the number of children recruited in the study. This translated into ten parents per school and the total number of parents in the study came to 40. Parents' educational level ranged from four to twelve years in school with the majority having reached the ninth grade. The expected number of participants in the study was 105. However, one teacher was out of the station at the time of the research. All the participants

were familiar with Bemba, a local language used for initial literacy and the mother tongue of most parents and children in the area. Bemba is also widely spoken in the country.

## **Data Collection Strategies**

### ***Interviews***

Semistructured interviews were conducted face to face with heads of primary schools, teachers of Grades 1–4, the District Education Standards Officer (DESO), Senior Education Standards Officer (SESO) of languages, DRCC, PRCC, and a college lecturer. Collecting data through interviews was advantageous, for interviews are known to be reasonably objective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) and flexible (Patton, 2002). Besides, semistructured interviews leave room for probing (Hancock, et al., 2007) thereby allowing for clarity and detail. For all participants, the interviews took place at their places of work (offices), except for one who opted to be interviewed at home for the sake of convenience. The following process was followed to conduct the interviews:

The researcher started by welcoming the participants and introducing herself as a way of putting the participants at ease. Thereafter, the researcher introduced the research to the participants, explaining the topic and the reason for the research, adhering to ethical guidelines (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). After participants had given their consent, the researcher began the interview, starting with the more general questions to allow participants to open up and provide answers in full (Richie & Lewis, 2003) and then moving to more specific ones.

During the interview, the researcher made handwritten notes, coupled with recording in the case of participants who permitted the researcher to tape record. The researcher made an effort to enhance an in-depth elicitation of information by trying to frame the questions clearly and by probing. Towards the end of the interview, the researcher notified the participants that the interview was coming to an end to ease the atmosphere and return to normal interactions (Richie & Lewis, 2003). The interview ended with thanking the participants for their participation, reassuring them that data collected would be put into safe custody and that it was purely for academic purposes.

### ***Focus Group Discussions***

Focus group discussions were conducted for parents and children (Creswell, 2007). Each of the focus groups was comprised of 10 people, a number that the researcher felt was small enough to allow for participants' adequate sharing of views and big enough to allow for divergent views (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As for the interviews above, the researcher began by introducing herself and the topic of the research, as well as its purpose. The participants were also taken through the ethical guidelines, after which they gave their consent to take part in the study. All focus group discussions were conducted in Bemba, since it was the language in which all participants were fluent. Later, the responses were translated to English by the researcher. During the process, the researcher was mindful of group dynamics, knowing that some people can dominate the discussion (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This helped the researcher to involve everyone. Individual participants were given a chance to "express their views without any interruption" in the way their responses were coming out (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 145). All the responses were recorded verbatim.

### ***Document Analysis***

The literacy syllabus used in primary teacher training was checked and analyzed to establish whether it included any topics related to PI in children's initial literacy learning in primary schools. The records of continuous professional development activities that had been conducted at the school level were

also obtained. The researcher was given access to the School Inset Record Book (SIR book), which was checked and analyzed for content on PI in children's literacy learning. The idea was to establish whether teachers had access to training on PI as a way of facilitating the involvement of parents in children's initial literacy learning in primary schools.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was thematically analyzed by coding significant themes in the participants' thoughts and reflections (Clark, 2006; Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The cut and paste in Microsoft Word coding procedure was used to help discover recurring patterns (Suter, 2012) in the data and from these, to develop themes, following a back-and-forth process.

### **Findings**

#### **Research question 1: How Primary Schools Ensure that Parents Have Opportunities for Involvement in Their Children's Initial Learning**

##### *a) School–Community Partnership Program*

The study established that each primary school visited had a School–Community Partnership Program (SCPP), an initiative of Read to Succeed (RTS), through which primary schools were linked to the community. Most participants revealed that invitations to parents to participate in various literacy-related activities both at school and at home were through the SCPP. A school administrator explained, "Through the SCPP, we invite parents to see how the children are learning. Under the same program, we have plans to construct a reading shelter within the school where parents can come and read stories to their children."

The study also revealed that under the SCPP, each school visited had a School–Community Partnership Committee (SCPC) which spearheaded PI in children's learning. According to the terms of reference provided to the researcher, one of the responsibilities of the SCPC was to ensure that the educational interests and welfare of children are given priority at all times in the areas of reading and writing. The committee met every month to plan and review PI activities in children's learning, noting that "A SCPC is in place and is in the forefront to spearhead PI activities" [School Administrator].

##### *Invitation to Parents to Participate in Literacy Events at School*

Invitations to parents to participate in literacy events at school included those requesting parents to attend Parents' Open Day and International World Literacy Day (IWLD) celebrations and Reading Circles (reading competitions) on closing day or any other selected day. For example, one teacher stated, "We invite parents to celebrate world literacy day with the children. During the celebrations, parents have an opportunity to observe their children perform literacy activities such as reading and writing." One school administrator also said, "On World Literacy Day, we call parents to come and celebrate with the learners and during the process, they see how their children are reading."

Parents and children noted the same thing. Parents stated that teachers invited them to attend children's reading competitions and International World Literacy Day (IWLD) celebrations, during which they had a chance to witness their children perform reading activities. Children explained that on closing day, teachers asked them to bring their parents to school so that they could attend their children's reading competitions. The same was the case for the IWLD celebrations.

The study also established that inviting parents to attend literacy events gave them an opportunity to read to the children as role models and to perform drama for the children: "We hold

literacy day celebrations and ask parents to see pupils reading. During Open Days, we ask parents to come and read in front of pupils as models. We also engage parents in poetry and drama performance during open days” [School Administrator].

One parent in a focus group discussion also said,

*“Tulasangwako uko abana balecimfyanya mukubelenga pampela ya term. Ici cilatupelako akashita kakumona ifyo abana balebelenga. Ngakuli open day, balatupelako inshita yakubelengela abana nokwangalako ifyangalo ifyalola kukufunda abana ubukankala bwaba mukwishiba ukubelenga nokulemba”.* (“We attend reading competitions at the end of the term. This gives us a chance to observe how children are reading. During school open days, we are given a chance to read to our children and perform some drama to teach children the importance of reading.”)

However, participants did not state how primary schools prepared parents to participate in such events apart from giving them formal invitations to attend the events.

The study also revealed that asking parents to attend literacy events at school also gave them an opportunity to see how their children were progressing in their literacy learning.

#### *b) Engaging Parents in the Preparation of Children’s Reading Materials*

The study established that parents were contributing learning and teaching materials in support of literacy lessons at the request of teachers and school administrators. Teachers were asking parents to come up with words and to compose traditional stories for use in the learning and teaching of literacy in primary schools. As expressed by one school administrator, “We ask parents to write storybooks in local languages and bring them to school. Sometimes, we request parents to prepare words for reading, which children read during reading competitions, and children who read well are rewarded.”

The parents and children also described the same thing, as expressed in one focus group discussion:

*Bakafundisha balatupela umulimo wakupenya amashivi ayakubeleenga abana mufyakucimfyanya uko naifve tusangwa nokumonako uko abana balebeleenga aya yene mashivi. Limo balatwipusha ukulemba ututabo twamalyashi nokuleeta kusukulu pakuti abana balebelenga.”* [Parent]

(Teachers assign us work to come up with reading words for children to use during reading competitions, which we also attend and see how they are reading. Sometimes, they ask us to write storybooks and bring them to school so that children can be reading.)

However, such stories and word lists were not offered to the researcher. Some parents also stated that they did not know how to write, and as such, they could not participate in the preparation of children’s reading materials, as expressed in a focus group discussion:

*Nangu bakafundisha batweba ukulemba utumalyashi nangu amashivi yakubelenga abana, tulafilwa pamulandu wakukana ishiba ukulemba na ukubeleenga. Ecimo cine namufyakubelenga ifyo bakafundisha bapeela abana ifyakubelengela. Cilefwaikwa bakafundisha ukumona ngakuti batwismilako isukulu hya mwashibukeni pakutwafwako ukusambilila ukubelenga nokulemba.* [parent]

(“Even though teachers ask us to write stories for the children to read, we fail to write because of illiteracy. This also applies to reading materials that teachers give children for us to read for them. There is need for teachers to consider opening adult classes to help us learn how to read and write.”)

The study also revealed that some parents were not responsive to the request. For example, one school administrator said, “We invite parents to come up with stories, but the response is not very good.”

*c) Encouraging Parents to Attend Their Children's Literacy Learning Sessions at School*

The study also found that primary schools encouraged parents to attend their children literacy learning through the SCPP. However, some participants said that this was done through Family Pac, a program that had been established by United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), explaining, "Teachers are asked to follow what was in Family Pac, where they invited parents to be in class and discern if there are any difficulties" (PRCC).

Parents and children were also in agreement with this idea. They stated that primary schools gave them freedom to visit the school and observe their children learning any time they felt like it. One parent said:

*Kusukulu bakafundisha nga baleefunda tulekala tulemfwa ifyo baleefunda. Twalikwata insambu shakuya kusukulu insbita ili yonse nokuyamona ifyo abana balesambilila ukulemba na ukubeleenga. [parent]*

("At school when teachers are teaching, we sit and listen to what they are teaching. We are free to visit classes any time we like and observe how children are learning how to read and write.")

Likewise, one child also said, "*Baleeta abafyashi mukumona ifyo leemba nefyo ubelenga mu class.*" ("They [teachers] invite our parents to see how we read and write in class.")

The study further established that teachers expected parents to make some comments in the form of praise and suggestions regarding their children's literacy learning and not just sit in class and observe. The study also found that invitations to parents to attend their children's initial literacy learning helped parents to learn and appreciate how traditional games and stories could be used to teach children how to read and write. Others said that observing children learning in a local language helped them to develop confidence that they could also teach their children at home:

*Ukusangwa uko abana balesambilia cilatwafwilishako ukusambilila ifyo ifyangalo na utushimi fngabomba mukufunda abana ukubelenga na ukulemba. [parent]*

("Attending children's learning sessions helps us to learn how traditional games and stories can be of help in teaching children how to read and write.")

However, some participants stated that some parents did not bother to see their children learning, saying "Even when they (parents) have been asked to be visiting classes to check on how their children are learning, they do not come". One parent; a member of the SCPC also put it this way: "*Lyonse tulasosa ukuti abafyashi baleisa pakuti basangwako nomba kubafyashi kwaliba umulele.*" ("We often talk about the need for parents to come and attend but there is inertia on the part of parents.")

Some primary schools had put up some measures to ensure that parents attended their children's literacy learning sessions. These included asking parents to log in the parents' visitation book and write their observations, putting a penalty on parents who did not want to see their children learning and asking teachers to record their interaction with parents.

*d) Communication with Parents*

Communication involved inviting parents to discuss with them their children's literacy performance, showing parents their children's literacy progress and discussing their children's literacy-related problems. On inviting parents to discuss their children's literacy performance, one teacher said, "We invite parents to school to come and share with them their children's performance in literacy. We invite parents when a child performs poorly in literacy."

Parents in a focus group discussion were also in support, as seen from what one parent said: “*Bakafundisba limolimo balatwita mukulanshanya pafyo abana besu baleebomba mu literacy. Balatulanga ifyo abana baleeya pantanshi.*” (“Sometimes teachers invite us to discuss with them how our children are performing in literacy. They show us how our children are progressing.”)

As for discussion of children’s literacy-related problems, one teacher said:

We call the parent if a child has a problem, and we try to identify areas where they can help by discussing together. When a child is absent, you call parents to find out because absenteeism is a serious cause for poor literacy and so we call parents so that they help us ensure that their children attend school regularly.

It was also found that primary schools mainly used general invitations to invite parents to school and not necessarily an invitation for literacy activities per se. Schools used development of the school as the reason for inviting parents to school. The language used in the invitation letters was, however, collaborative in that parents were addressed as partners, as seen in the sample sentence: “We invite you to come to school so that we can discuss some developmental issues concerning our school.”

#### **e) Giving Children Homework**

The study found that all schools gave children literacy homework to be done with the help of parents at home. This included word-building from sounds learned in class, story composition, and sentence construction. For example, one teacher said, “When teaching new sounds, I give learners homework and tell them to ask their parents to help them identify and formulate words with that particular sound.” Another teacher with a similar view put it this way, “When learning a particular sound, learners are told to ask parents to help them make words that are related to that particular sound. For those in Grade 4, they even make stories.”

It was also found that teachers were asking parents to sign their children’s literacy homework as acknowledgment of their involvement. However, the type of homework exemplified assumed that parents knew how to read, and schools did not state how they involved those who could not read.

Parents agreed that teachers gave pupils homework, which included books for parents to read to children at home and requests for parents to check their children’s exercise books. They also stated that their children were asking for help from them in their literacy activities, such as teaching them how to read and telling them stories. However, some parents felt that children did not regularly ask for help with literacy-related activities. They stated that primary grade children were the ones who asked more often.

In addition, some parents expressed a lack of knowledge of how to help children with homework, explaining that they sometimes asked their children to ask other people to help. Children agreed that teachers gave them different homework activities as a way of involving parents in their initial literacy learning:

*Ba teacher nga batupela homework limbi ukupaanga imiseela batweba ati abakung’anda baye mvafivako. Nga ba teacher batupela home-work, batweba ati takuli knyaisangila uye eba abakalamba boobe bakwafiveko.*

(“When teachers give us homework such as making sentences, they tell us that people at home should help you. When teachers give us homework, they tell us not to go and answer by ourselves but to go and ask your older brothers/sisters to help you.”)

However, the children expressed that sometimes their parents told them that they did not know how to help, as expressed in the following:

*Nshishibe ifyakucita, mipushe bamunonko nangu abanobe. Nshaishiba ukubelenga. Finshi mvacisambilila. Nafikosa, bushe tabacimipelako example?*

(“I do not know what to do, ask your brothers and sisters. I do not know how to read. What did you learn? It is difficult. Were you not given an example?”)

Asked how teachers prepared them (children) to interact with their parents with homework, the children had different views, some of which were:

*Batwebafye ati muyeeba abakunganda bamwafweko.* (“They merely ask us to tell people at home to help us.”)

*Balanda ati nganawishiba uisangile wemwine.* (“They say, “If you know, find answers on your own.”)

*Balanda ati takuli kuleka abafyashi bakulembela. Kubepushafye bakulangako ifyakulemba.* (“They say, ‘do not let parents write for you but just ask them to show you how to write.’”)

*Balanda ati mwikale nomunobe musange.* (“They say, “Sit with your friend and work out the answers.”)

Some teachers felt that not much was being done to ensure that parents had opportunities for involvement in their children’s initial literacy learning. Asked why this was the case, some attributed this to parents’ negative attitudes while others to their limited knowledge of PI.

#### **f) Monitoring of Pupils’ Literacy Exercise Books and Teachers’ Preparations**

It was found that school administrators monitored teacher preparations to ensure that teachers included teaching aids to stick in classes for the inspiration of parents while teachers monitored children’s exercise books to check for parents’ signatures, which served as a guarantee of parents’ participation in their children’s literacy homework. One school administrator had this to say:

We monitor pupils’ books and the preparations of teachers to check for homework on literacy. We encourage teachers to design good teaching aids to stick in class for the inspiration of parents when they visit classes. We also check for parents’ signatures under the given work in pupils’ books.

However, not all the parents were able to sign the pupils’ exercise books to guarantee their participation in their children’s homework.

For the PEO official from Standards office, PI in children’s initial literacy learning was achieved by embracing the efforts of cooperating partners:

We are open to the initiatives of cooperating partners such as Read to Succeed. Teachers are also asked to follow what was in New Break Through to Literacy (NBTL) Family Pac where they invite parents to be in class and discern if there are any difficulties.

It was also found that some officials at Provincial Education and District Education offices were working in collaboration with RTS to monitor what was going on in primary schools. For example, responding to a question on what mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that there was PI in children’s initial literacy learning in primary schools, both officials from Teacher Education Department (TED), at PEO and DEBS, agreed that monitoring to see what was going on in schools was being done through the RTS Program.

However, there was a mismatch on the views of officials from Standards Office at PEO and DEBS office and those from TED in the same offices. Some officials from the Standards office at

DEBS believed that PI in children's initial literacy learning was the responsibility of TED and the Planning office at DEBS:

The office is not doing anything. Issues to do with PI in children's learning are not under this office. The work is done by planning and Teacher Education. They are the ones working with RTS. For us, ...we have very little.

After further probing on what was being done in regard to monitoring by Standards Office, the same DEBS official said, "We do not have contacts with schools. We have never done any monitoring." It was also found that the Standards Office felt left out in what was being done to ensure that there was PI in children's initial literacy learning; a situation they believed to be a hindrance to the sustenance and success of PI in children's literacy learning in primary schools:

The program spearheading PI, for example, RTS leave out the department that is supposed to implement academic and curriculum delivery. Sustainability is at stake because the District Education Standards Office is left out. Because we are not involved, there is a gap. There should be a system flowing from the DEBS office. [District Standards Officer]

### **Research Question 2: Aspects of PI in the Primary Teacher Training Literacy Syllabus that Address How Teachers Can Involve Parents in Their Children's Literacy Learning**

It was established that the college literacy syllabus did not include any methodological components to empower student teachers with knowledge and skills for involving parents in their children's initial literacy learning, raising doubts as to whether or not teachers had essential knowledge and skills to involve parents in their children's initial literacy learning. One lecturer, who said that as lecturers, they had scant knowledge on PI, further confirmed this doubt:

Limited information is passively obtained from workshops and is not enough to make us understand the various dimensions of parental involvement. We only train teachers on how to teach literacy from grade one and simply make mention that teachers should avail information to parents.

On whether or not teachers had the knowledge and skills needed to involve parents in their children's initial literacy learning in primary schools, one official from the DEBS office said:

We invite teachers in the transition phase and try to sensitize them on the importance of involving parents in their children's literacy learning. We also conduct ongoing sensitization through grade meetings, which are conducted at school or district level. Teachers have been trained and given a guideline on how to involve parents in homework.

The study further established that teachers had not received any training on PI in children's literacy learning from teacher training, workshops or Continuous Professional Development activities. Out of the 15 recruited in the study, only 4 reported having received some training through the RTS program. One teacher stated, "I did not learn anything during teacher training, but through RTS I have learned something." After further probing on what topics of parental involvement were covered by RTS, one teacher said, "Read to Succeed emphasizes giving homework, inviting parents to see how their children are learning and giving children storybooks to read to their parents."

The study also established that noninclusion of PI as a component in teacher training was a challenge to Provincial and District Education officials, teachers, and lecturers. For example, one officer from the Provincial Education Office stated that teacher preparation was inadequate and that teachers had limited knowledge on PI in children's initial literacy learning. A teacher with a similar view also said:

As teachers, we do not have adequate knowledge on parental involvement. Most of the things we do are on a trial basis. We know that it is good. However, we were not trained on what is involved. But Read to Succeed has enlightened us a bit.

A PEO official from Standards Office also expressed that lecturers did not have adequate knowledge, an idea that was also expressed by a lecturer teaching literacy in a college of education, who stated, “Our knowledge as lecturers is equally limited. As a teacher trainer, I simply follow the literacy syllabus that has no component on parental involvement.”

The document checklist was another instrument used to establish if teacher training included components on PI in children’s initial literacy learning. According to the analysis, the content did not include any component on PI in children’s literacy learning.

Equally, the School Inset Record Book in which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities are recorded showed that CPD activities conducted in primary schools for the previous two years from this study did not capture any topic related to PI in children’s literacy learning. Out of the four schools, only one school’s record of CPD meeting passively mentioned the need to set open days to facilitate interaction between parents and teachers and this was not pursued to define modalities of how this was to be done. Officials from DEBS and PEO Offices felt that inclusion of PI topics in CPD activities was the responsibility of teachers themselves.

## Discussion of Findings

Cooperating partners, such as RTS, were reported to be the ones who were meeting some of the critical aspects of PI in children’s initial literacy learning. While this can be seen as positive, as they played a big role in this aspect, it can be also be argued that this mode of involvement is short-lived, as sustainability of these efforts remained questionable. However, the formation of the SCPP by RTS was a good initiative, as it set in motion PI in children’s initial literacy learning. Through this program, primary schools were able to meet one of the objectives for community participation, which is “strengthening community linkages” (MoE, 1996, p. 131) that is primary insofar as PI in children’s initial literacy learning is concerned. In this regard, the SCPP enabled primary schools to reach out to the community and initiate PI activities in support of children’s initial literacy learning (Holloway et al., 2008).

In addition to this, the existence of the SCPC under the SCPP was indicative of primary schools’ commitment to PI in children’s initial literacy learning at the grassroots level. This entails that primary schools had an established structure under which PI in children’s initial literacy learning was spearheaded. This is critical, as it can enhance commitment to PI in children’s initial literacy learning. By holding regular meetings, the committee was able to come up with various strategies through which primary schools reached out to the parents and involved them in various activities that supported their children’s initial literacy learning. These findings are consistent with Glasgow and Whitney (2009), who stated that how much parents get involved in children’s learning was dependent on how often schools reached out to parents. For primary schools in Mungwi District, this was made possible through the SCPC, which devised various strategies for PI in children’s literacy learning.

Encouraging parents to attend their children’s literacy learning sessions can be one way through which primary schools created an open, inviting, and welcoming environment for PI in children’s initial literacy learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This was important, as it not only created parents’ opportunity for involvement in children’s literacy learning but also enabled parents to have access to capacity-building, as capacity-building opportunities are known to be

embedded in teaching and learning (Mapp & Kuttiner, 2013). By attending their children's initial literacy learning sessions, parents were able to have an experience of how literacy-supporting behaviors, such as singing and storytelling, can be used to enhance children's initial literacy learning at home. In this way, PI in children's initial literacy learning was enhanced.

As for the engagement of parents in the preparation of children's reading materials, primary schools enabled parents to use their expertise to contribute to their children's initial literacy learning. In this way, primary schools managed to do what Harris and Goodall (2007) referred to as harnessing what parents could do to help the school achieve its goal, which in this case is enhancing children's initial literacy learning. This is critical, as it can enhance the parents' role in their children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). By asking parents to write stories and words for use in children's literacy learning activities, primary schools created an opportunity for parents to see themselves as partners in the learning of their children, contrary to the view that schools should do everything. This is even more true when parents see their own work being used by the school in the teaching of children, as was the case in this study. Therefore, engaging parents in the preparation of reading materials was one way through which primary schools helped develop and strengthen parents' beliefs on roles that they can perform to support their children's literacy learning in primary schools.

The absence of methodological components on PI involvement in children's initial literacy learning in teacher training meant that teachers came out of the college with little to no knowledge to enhance their involvement of parents in their children's literacy learning (Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). This may explain why teachers could not effectively guide students and parents on what they needed to do (Agronick et al., 2009). For example, the instructions teachers gave children on homework did not provide much information on what parents were required to do, contrary to good practice (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010; Mapp & Kuttiner, 2013). Therefore, noninclusion of methodological components on PI in teacher training was a hindrance to PI in primary schools, as it deprived lecturers of the knowledge of how to motivate parents to be involved in their children's learning (Sandra & Hoover- Dempsey, 1997).

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study demonstrates that efforts towards ensuring that parents were involved in their children's initial literacy learning in primary schools were largely limited to the initiatives of cooperating partners such as RTS. In this regard, PI may not be expected to make a meaningful contribution towards redressing the poor literacy achievement levels of Zambia's school-going children. Although working with cooperating partners appeared to have met some of the critical aspects of PI in children's initial literacy learning, sustainability of these efforts cannot be guaranteed as partners work within limited periods beyond which they have no control of what follows. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's models (1997, 2005) of parental involvement provide information on what teachers may need to know and understand in order to effectively involve parents in their children's literacy learning. Thus, this study affirms the idea that primary schools' staff on their own, without undergoing any training, may not effectively involve parents in their children's literacy learning. Therefore, teacher training is critical to PI in children's initial literacy learning in primary schools. In view of this, the study recommends the following:

- Teacher Education should consider inclusion of methodological components on PI in children's literacy learning in the college literacy syllabus to ensure teacher preparation on PI in initial literacy learning in primary schools.

- There is need to embed PI in the school curriculum to enhance the commitment of teachers and school administrators.
- The Ministry of General Education should come up with a comprehensive inservice program to empower lecturers with knowledge and skills on PI in children's literacy learning for effective involvement of parents.

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## *Construyendo Puentes: Translanguaging in Community Literacy Spaces*

Laura Beth Kelly, Stephanie Abraham, Kate Kedley and Cinthya Bolanos

### **Abstract**

This paper reports a comparative case study between two distinct community literacy research sites in the United States. Both sites undertook bilingual reading and writing projects in English and Spanish with children, one in a public library and the other in a community center writing program. Over time, these two unrelated projects took a translanguaging turn, and this paper compares and analyzes how translanguaging operated at each site, especially as researchers attempted to promote Spanish. We documented common affordances such as mirroring community language practices and creating inclusive, participatory environments. The comparison also revealed limitations, such as translanguaging's limited ability to resist the societal dominance of English and challenges associated with enacting translanguaging in programs facing high staff and participant turnover. The study suggests the potential of translanguaging approaches in community literacy projects while also documenting areas for researchers and educators to approach translanguaging work thoughtfully to ensure it meets their program goals.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, bilingual education, out-of-school literacies, community literacies, heritage language

### **Introduction**

As participants in a language mapping workshop sponsored by Autores Fuertes, a bilingual, community-based writing center, eight children were mapping community languages through images, video, and audio. They photographed store signs in English, Vietnamese, and Chinese, and crowded into the corner tortillería, filming a transaction in Spanish. “Dos libras de tortillas, porfa,” the customer said.

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A thousand miles away at Bilingual Storytime, a college student stood in front of a group of twelve scowling children and their parents with *La Catrina*, a bilingual book about emotions with Día de los Muertos-themed art. “Can everybody show me their enojado faces?” One child yelled out that enojado means angry, and the college student excitedly agreed.

Although these projects were in different regions of the US, different contexts, with a different literacy focus (writing and reading), and different ages, they shared a goal of fostering bilingual (Spanish and English) literacies for Latinx children. In both spaces, the researchers, families, and children embraced translanguaging, and this commonality led us to a comparative case study to understand how translanguaging pedagogies worked in these spaces. For this comparative case study, we focused on answering the question “What are the affordances and limitations of translanguaging in these community literacy projects?”

## **Translanguaging and Literacies in Community Spaces**

### **What Does it Mean to Translanguage?**

Translanguaging is a theory that attempts to account for authentic language practices of multilinguals in their homes and communities (Canagarajah, 2011b). Initially, translanguaging as a term described instructional practices in Welsh classrooms, where teachers strategically used Welsh and English to support students’ developing bilingualism (Lewis et al., 2012). However, in recent US-based scholarship, translanguaging has come to posit both an ideological stance toward language and to account for the blending of languages as a “communicative norm of bilingual communities” (García, 2011, p. 51) as practiced in “communities and everyday communicative contexts” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 2).

More specifically, a translanguaging view of “language, bilingualism, and the education of bilinguals ... considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 2). This view emphasizes that people draw from all their languages as “an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011a, p. 401) or “a single expanded linguistic repertoire” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 70), rather than two separate language systems. Thus, we viewed our multilingual participants as always having all their languages “on,” even during what may be perceived as monolingual environments (Mallikarjun et al., 2017).

In turn, translanguaging pedagogies are meant to help teachers recognize and include their students’ full linguistic repertoire (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 14), which can reposition students from lacking language and literacy to having linguistic assets (Menken, 2013). Translanguaging for academic purposes takes many forms, such as incorporating multiple languages during the writing process or a final written product (Machado & Hartman, 2019), reading multilingual texts, or having multilingual discussions (Fu et al., 2019). Moreover, translanguaging pedagogies validate students’ home languages and disrupt the distinction between home and school languages (García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Wei, 2014). Thus, taking a translanguaging approach, in both research and pedagogy, helped us resist monolingual and deficit perspectives in language learning by centering the creative and authentic practices of multilingual communities.

### **Translanguaging in Community Literacy Spaces**

Because both cases were located in community educational spaces, we review translanguaging scholarship conducted in similar spaces (beyond schools) that served multilingual children with language or literacy as a learning focus.

## **Community Spaces and Heritage Language**

Bilingual families and children care about maintaining Spanish and recognize their heritage language as a connection to their families, a means of communication within a broader community, and part of their identity (Jean & Geva, 2012; You, 2005). As well, families identify bilingual proficiency as valuable for their children's future (Lee & Jeong, 2013).

While wonderful exceptions exist, robust bilingual programs across the P–12 grade range are not guaranteed to emergent bilingual students in the US (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Wright, 2007). Where bilingual programs do exist, testing pressures and the societal dominance of English can still make it hard for these programs to center Spanish (Potowski, 2004). Thus, programs beyond the school day, like Bilingual Storytime and Autores Fuertes, have become increasingly necessary to support Spanish learning and maintenance.

Spanish-speaking communities have developed community-based strategies for passing on their language (Carreira & Rodríguez, 2011). Programs as varied as scout groups (Guardado, 2009) and weekend STEM clubs (Kelly et al., 2019) that run in Spanish or bilingually show the “great linguistic agency and resourcefulness on the part of Latino parents” as well as their “clear understanding of the role and critical need that they envision for Spanish” (Carreira & Rodríguez, 2011, p. 156). These community-based programs provide authentic contexts for becoming bilingual and bicultural, providing some resistance to society's monolingual English norm and legitimizing Spanish for children who may not hear it much outside of the home. Since not seeing one's home language in prestige positions in society contributes to language loss, these community programs become “sites of validation” (Guardado & Becker, 2014, p. 177).

Finally, community sites offer some freedom not available in schools. In community-based programs, restrictive language policies, standardized testing pressures, and mandated curricula disappear, leaving parents and community members more flexibility to build the programs they want. Both Rodriguez (2019) and Gallo and Link (2015) found libraries better spaces than schools for the critical work they did with bilingual students for these reasons. As Alvarez and Alvarez (2016) showed in their ethnographic study of a bilingual library, the library became a “space for communities to promote and reclaim their home languages distinct from local public schools” (p. 412).

## **Community Spaces and Translanguaging**

Much research has focused on translanguaging in schools as a tool to support students' biliterate learning and create welcoming, inclusive classrooms (García & Kleyn, 2016). Other research has explored family translanguaging practices (Paulsrud & Straszer, 2018) and translanguaging practices in communities, specifically workplaces and food markets (Blackledge & Creese, 2017). Yet less work has focused on translanguaging in community-based literacy centers and projects.

Existing research suggests that families value translanguaging educational spaces, but that often translanguaging is not “enough” to counter the dominance of English in these programs. For instance, Axelrod and Cole (2018) documented the translanguaging practices of emergent bilinguals in a before-school program designed to value their heritage Spanish. They found that children and families valued the space because the children did not receive formal instruction in Spanish during school. Children in this study had an interest in reading and writing Spanish conventionally (e.g., correct spelling) and used their knowledge of English phonics to do so. Yet the program struggled with English dominance, causing the researchers to ponder “if flexible, natural arrangements of language usage in translanguaging spaces are sufficient to counter these kinds of hegemonic forces” (p. 151).

In another case, Bussert-Webb, Masso, and Lewis (2018) described teacher candidates working in an after-school program to promote translanguaging in writing with elementary-age children. They found the community space counteracted negative perceptions that the children learned in monolingual schools that privileged English. However, the children still brought the expectation from school that they should keep their languages separate, hesitating to enact the translanguaging practices that the adults encouraged. Furthermore, Martínez-Roldán (2015) showed in her study of translanguaging practices in an after-school program in the US Southwest that teachers reinforced English as the primary language, suggesting that flexible language practices in bilingual spaces may reinforce English hegemony. Each of these studies recognized the larger sociopolitical climate, including high-stakes testing narratives, societal English dominance, and the goals of program funders as influencing language practices in each site.

Thus, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how translanguaging pedagogies were practiced in two community-based educational sites.

## Methods

We framed our case studies as community-engaged scholarship meant to serve the needs and goals of the communities surrounding Autores Fuertes and Bilingual Storytime. Though researchers designed and led both projects, we welcomed community involvement and responded to community feedback in our program designs. For this project, we engaged in a comparative case study approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). Each team initiated participatory methods where we intentionally attempted to change some practices within each of our cases. This comparative case study demonstrates how translanguaging happened in these different contexts, highlighting the collective insights, as well as differences, and facilitating a stronger argument from each case (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016).

## Data Analysis

We conducted a horizontal analysis to compare how translanguaging unfolded in our distinct contexts (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). Each team reviewed our previously collected data sources (described below) and coded with a priori codes (Saldaña, 2013) for the *affordances* and *limitations* of translanguaging at their site. We coded as *affordances* examples of how translanguaging contributed to student learning or a positive educational environment. As *limitations*, we coded instances when translanguaging did not contribute to the learning or environment desired. After that, we used pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to categorize the affordances and limitations of translanguaging at our sites, and then wrote summary narratives of these categories. Separately, we generated key assertions (Erickson, 1986) based on a comparison of narrative summaries of coded data. We found each team generated similar assertions (Table 1), so we developed those claims with common wording; we substantiate each of those claims in the findings with representative data samples.

**Table 1.** *Sample Data Summaries from Each Site*

	<b>Sample data summaries of affordances of translanguaging</b>	<b>Sample data summaries of limitations of translanguaging</b>
<b>Autores Fuertes</b>	Children dominant in any language could participate.  Bilingual writing captured complexity of multilingual experiences.	Children overwhelmingly wrote in English.  People come and go, bringing conflicting language ideologies to the program.
<b>Bilingual Storytime</b>	Everyone understands what's happening even if it's in a language they're still learning.  The "translanguaging read aloud" lets us read more complex books in Spanish than we otherwise could have.	The translanguaging approach is difficult to communicate to program volunteers.  English is dominant in our books, songs, promotional materials, etc.

### **Autores Fuertes**

Autores Fuertes was one site in a network of community-based writing centers meant to serve Latinx communities of South Philadelphia. While a majority of the community spoke Spanish, many also use indigenous Mesoamerican languages. Most children who attended the center were US citizens of immigrant families, spoke Spanish predominantly at home, and attended English-medium schools. Our research team included two white university researchers who were both bilingual in English and Spanish and lived in the community.

At Autores Fuertes, our initial research question focused on how a translanguaging pedagogy shaped the language and literacy practices of the center (Abraham et al., 2020; Abraham & Kedley, 2021; Abraham et al., 2021). Data collection began with participant observations, specifically related to how language and literacy were framed and practiced. Those observations occurred twice weekly and lasted from one to three hours, for a period of two years.

As the project progressed, and to model a translanguaging pedagogy, Stephanie and Kate (Authors 2 and 3) designed and taught bilingual writing workshops, such as Writing Bilingual Family Stories and Community Language Mapping. These two-hour workshops met Saturdays for approximately eight weeks, open to any child aged six to twelve. Over two years, 50 children participated, with varied attendance. To prompt the children to translanguage in their writing, we used bilingual interview protocols for interviewing family and community members and showed examples of how Latinx authors translanguage in their texts. During workshops, we collected data through the children's writing artifacts and audio/video recordings, which were subsequently transcribed.

### **Bilingual Storytime**

Laura, Cinthya (Authors 1 and 4), and a team of college students began Bilingual Storytime as a joint project between Rhodes College and the Memphis Public Libraries to support Spanish-speaking families hoping to raise their children to speak and read Spanish (Kelly & Bolanos, 2020). Storytime occurred monthly on Saturday mornings to accommodate working families. Lasting thirty minutes, Storytime consisted of reading picture books, singing, poems, and games. Although we initially separated activities in English and Spanish, we transitioned to a translanguaging approach in our activities. Storytime drew between 40 and 60 people, including parents. Participants included a mix of

Black, Latinx, and White families who spoke English and/or Spanish; some had immigrated from Spanish-speaking countries; and children ranged from babies to upper elementary school age.

Our research team included a bilingual, but not bicultural, white university researcher with experience working with Spanish-speaking communities in Memphis (Laura), and a changing group of around five college student volunteers. The college student volunteers represented various degrees of bilingualism and bicultural experiences; two of the college volunteer researchers (including Cinthya) grew up in Spanish-speaking Memphis.

Our library admitted that they had no coordinated outreach to Spanish-speaking families at the time that Bilingual Storytime began. Because of our prior work with Spanish speakers in our city, we knew that some families with tenuous immigration status might have concerns about participating in library programs. While libraries do not collaborate with immigration enforcement, people may see libraries as a government entity that does, for example, ask for identification and proof of address to acquire a library card. Thus, we did not ask people to sign forms, give their names, or consent to recording to participate in storytime. Consequently, our data sources include collaboratively written, reflective research journals after each storytime; anonymous exit surveys administered at each storytime asking what participants enjoyed and what suggestions they had; and storytime plans, codeveloped for each storytime. The storytimes reported in this manuscript occurred over a ten-month period.

## Findings

Our findings fit in two major sections: affordances and limitations of translanguaging. Under each of those headings, we make claims, illustrated with data from each case, then offer a cross-case comparison.

### Affordances of Translanguaging

We identified two common affordances of a translanguaging pedagogy in these community spaces.

#### *Translanguaging Mirrored and Engaged with Community Language Practices*

Rather than conforming to monolingual, or one language at a time, discourses of practice, we found in both cases that practicing a translanguaging pedagogy helped us to mirror and embrace the authentic community language practices of the children and families.

**Autores Fuertes.** We collected this data during a six-week Community Language Mapping workshop. During the first session, children created a language map of the places in their lives, such as the playground, neighborhood, or grocery store. They drew their language maps on posters and included words in any language, symbols, or drawings. In this transcript, Stephanie and Luis discussed the words he used at his dad's house, which he would eventually include on his language map.

**Luis:** Pues, como no hay tanto en su casa. No hay tanto. Veo la tele. Juego con mi perro. Mi perro's nombre es Scrapy. [Well, there's not a lot in his house. Not a lot. I watch TV. I play with my dog. My dog's name is Scrapy.]

**Stephanie:** Scrapy! [laughing] ¡Todo de esto tienes que poner! [You have to put all of that!]

**Luis:** El problema es, no sé cómo escribir Scrapy. [The problem is, I don't know how to write Scrapy.]

**Stephanie:** No importa. She [pointing to another child] just told me, "I don't care if I spell it wrong."

In this example, Luis predominantly responded to Stephanie in Spanish. He mentioned the “tele” and claimed “no hay tanto” at his dad’s house. Yet, he inserted what may be perceived as a common dog’s name in English, Scappy. This speech reflected his bilingual and bicultural reality, where he used two languages to negotiate his daily life, while also adopting a US English cultural practice of naming his dog Scappy. Also, he employed a syntactic structure from English within this Spanish-dominant communicative turn. He used the apostrophe followed by the letter s (mi perro’s nombre es) to indicate possession rather than the Spanish structure of the noun followed by the preposition de, or el nombre de mi perro es. If our pedagogical practices were framed monolingually, without a translanguaging lens, this linguistic act may have been deemed incorrect or corrected, narrowing the inclusion of his linguistic repertoire. Yet, by taking a translanguaging stance, we recognized that his linguistic constructions demonstrated his active bilingualism, allowing him to use his authentic language practices, rather than fracturing his linguistic repertoire.

**Bilingual Storytime.** Several storytime facilitators grew up speaking Spanish and English, and they implemented translanguaging practices familiar to them, such as blending Spanish, English, and gestures while they read and provided commentary. For example, in a storytime themed around body parts, Cinthya read a story in English about injured animals. On each page, she showed the pictures, read the English text, and said, “Oh no! He hurt his brazo [arm]!” and led the children in the rhyme, “Sana, sana, colita de rana. Si no sanas hoy, ¡sanarás mañana!” This Spanish rhyme, commonly said when a child has a small injury, was not in the English text, but Cinthya repeated it with the children on each page. Her use of Spanish, which she added to the all-English text, mirrored the practices of bilingual speakers who sometimes substitute familiar nouns across languages (as when she said, “He hurt his brazo!” to help children learn the Spanish word for arm). Furthermore, she reflected authentic community language use by inserting a traditional Spanish-language dicho or proverb into the story.

Additionally, families affirmed the program by writing on exit surveys: “¡Qué continúen este tipo de programas y que sean más frecuentes!” [Keep doing this type of program and do them often!] and mentioned liking “todas las actividades, en especial que fuera español e inglés” [all the activities, especially that they were in Spanish and English.]. Based on such responses, we perceived that families felt positive about the blend of languages and that the program represented their language practices.

**Comparative Analysis.** Across these two cases, the researchers and participants used their entire linguistic repertoires when teaching and learning. We used intentional translanguaging when reading a book or guiding a language map activity. As well, all participants enacted translanguaging practices: Luis in his responses to Stephanie, Cinthya in her read-aloud, and families at Bilingual Storytime. In the case of Bilingual Storytime, families expressed their comfort and affirmation of the translanguaging practices, while at Autores Fuertes, the children showed comfort and affirmation through their use of Spanish and English with the workshop leaders. In terms of difference, at Autores Fuertes, all of the children were Latinx, emergent bilinguals, and intentionally translanguaging during the workshops was meant to mirror and include their translanguaging practices at home and in their community. However, at Bilingual Storytime, white, Black, and Latinx families with differing linguistic repertoires attended, and translanguaging may only have mirrored the authentic language practices of some attendees.

### ***Translanguaging Fostered Participation and Communication across Groups at All Language and Literacy Proficiencies***

Our translanguaging stance made it possible for diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, and age groups to participate in literacy together. It also facilitated full participation even for children and adults who had developing, rather than fluent, proficiency in English or Spanish.

**Autores Fuertes.** In the spring of 2019, we offered a graphics writing workshop for eight weeks, targeted toward children between 10 and 14 years old. During the first session, Kate brought books for the children to examine, including graphic novels with multilingual writing written or illustrated by Chicanx and Latinx people. Edwin, an 11-year-old who had attended nearly all of the workshops over the years, as always, was eager to start reading and writing. However, he had in tow his six-year-old sister, Argentina, who was reluctant to join the workshop. In the following transcript, taken from the beginning of the session, Kate and Edwin negotiate with Argentina to join.

**Kate:** Are you going to join our class? ¿Quieres juntarnos? Come on!

**Edwin:** Come on, Argentina! You're gonna like, you're gonna like... you can learn about all the things...

**Kate:** Why don't you join us? Imagine that! Tu hermano quiere que estés aquí...

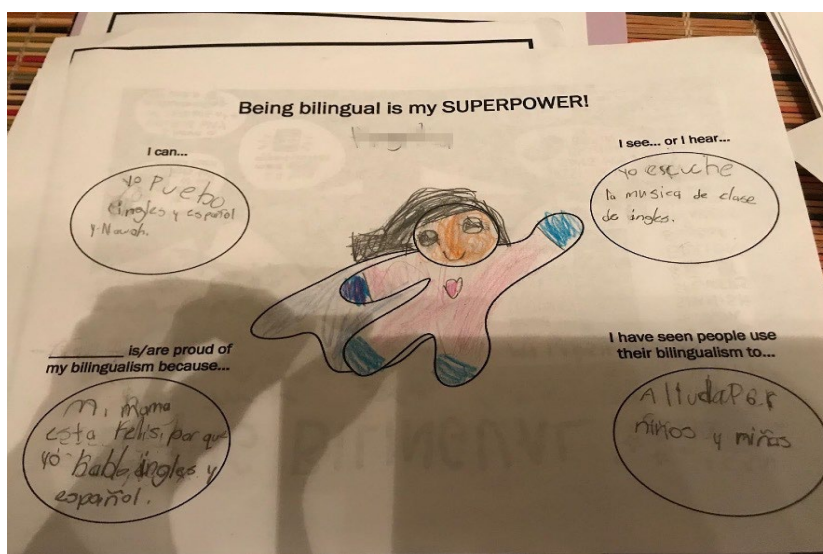
**Edwin:** Es una cosa normal, Argentina...

**Kate:** She's an artist, wow.

**Amalia (Edwin's Mom):** Verdad.

In this short transcript, Kate used both Spanish and English to communicate with Argentina, whose linguistic repertoire contained more Spanish than English. Yet Kate used both English and Spanish with Edwin and although Amalia always spoke Spanish to us, her response of “verdad” indicated that she still understood this communicative event. Then we encouraged Edwin and Argentina to work together on reading and creating graphics, asking Edwin to support Argentina as she thumbed through books and drew on blank paper. The two siblings worked on two “bilingual superhero” graphics (Figure 1) and then dictated a story to another volunteer.

**Figure 1.** *Argentina's Bilingual Superhero Graphic*



Near the end of the session, Edwin reflected, “I am proud of my sister, that she speaks English and Spanish.” Then, they completed the graphic organizer about Argentina’s bilingualism together. We knew that translanguaging disrupts boundaries between languages; however, in this instance, it also disrupted boundaries determined by age. Argentina, who was “technically” too young to participate in the workshop, participated with Edwin’s translanguaging mentorship where he modeled his bilingualism and writing.

**Bilingual Storytime.** On exit surveys, families explained how the translanguaging approach supported participation regardless of children’s language backgrounds and literacy levels. When asked

what they liked about storytime, one participant responded, “The mix of Spanish and English ... Seeing very young language learners comprehend in both languages.” Another commented that they liked “todo en general, los juegos, la lectura, y la participación de los niños” [everything generally, the games, the reading, the children’s participation]. Translanguaging accentuated the multicultural, multilingual nature of Bilingual Storytime and helped families from a variety of linguistic backgrounds to feel comfortable.

Furthermore, to support participation regardless of language proficiency, we developed a translanguaging read-aloud protocol (Kelly, 2022) in which we read longer Spanish-language picturebooks by selecting key sentences to read, paraphrasing some pages, selectively adding English commentary, and drawing children’s attention to the pictures. This approach made longer and more complex Spanish-language books accessible regardless of children’s level of Spanish literacy. As we increased the translanguaging approaches over successive storytimes, we documented in our research journal increased participation in terms of children focusing on the activities, singing along, and answering questions. This finding contrasted with our initial observations that children who spoke one language best lost interest when we conducted activities like songs or games entirely in the language less familiar to them. Translanguaging allowed us to do harder, longer, or more complex activities in either language because everyone could participate throughout.

**Comparative Analysis.** Data from both settings affirmed that the translanguaging stance created an inclusive space across generations. Families with diverse language backgrounds could participate because each site welcomed participation in English, Spanish, or both; children did not have to already have a high level of proficiency in both languages to write at Autores Fuertes or read and sing at Bilingual Storytime. Their parents could support their participation at both sites in whatever language they preferred.

Data from both sites indicated that participants benefited from multimodal literacy in conjunction with translanguaging. Specifically, the multimodal nature of graphic novels and comics as well as picturebooks, songs with movement, and illustrated poems allowed children to draw on other semiotic repertoires as they composed, read, and embodied literacy. Just as translanguaging disrupts notions of discrete languages, recent scholarship on multimodal literacy disrupts traditional notions of text and reading. This multimodal approach supported the children’s language comprehension as translanguaging allowed them to make connections across languages, and multimodality facilitated comprehension and communication, increasing accessibility across language proficiency, age, and other differences.

Importantly, we noted several differences between the two sites. First, Autores Fuertes was more child-driven in contrast to Bilingual Storytime, where children participated in a planned sequence of adult-selected activities. Thus, the ways that translanguaging supported the children differed. As the interaction between Edwin and Argentina showed, at Autores Fuertes, the children mediated translanguaging for each other. At Bilingual Storytime, the more structured environment, the instructional strategies and input provided the linguistic support of translanguaging.

Secondly, at Autores Fuertes, language was a focus of inquiry, highlighting the children’s metalinguistic awareness of their translanguaging practices. In contrast, at Bilingual Storytime, language was a vehicle rather than a focus. Participants used two languages to explore common early childhood themes (colors, music, body parts, etc.), but they did not explicitly discuss their language practices.

## Limitations of Translanguaging

### *Translanguaging Did Not Provide Equal Status to Both Languages*

Both research teams conceptualized our work as supporting Spanish language and literacy development and resisting the societal dominance of English. Yet we documented the constant pull towards English and our efforts to resist that pressure, or how we sometimes succumbed to it.

**Autores Fuertes.** In fall 2017, we offered a workshop on Writing Bilingual Family Stories. During the first session, we gave the children a bilingual family story interview protocol to guide them in interviewing family about family histories. In the next session, we talked through their notes and family's responses, using both English and Spanish, to guide them in choosing one story to develop. While the notes on the interview protocol were in both English and Spanish, we noticed children drafted their family stories all in English. To address this monolingualism, as we moved to the revising stage, we shared books that modeled translanguaging (e.g., *The Princess and the Warrior* by Duncan Tonatiuh).

After this activity, we held writing conferences with each child, asking them to read their drafted family stories. We prompted them to incorporate Spanish in their stories by mirroring how the authors had translanguaged in picturebooks. By the end of the workshop, each child used a mix of Spanish and English in their published family stories. The following excerpts are from two stories that demonstrate translanguaging.

**Marco:** I was crying because I didn't want to leave El Salvador I missed my papa mi familia mi companeros mi tias, hermanos, Primos, tios, abuelo and the food pupusas y el clima es caliente in the airplane we ate popyes.

**Luis:** My mama was done eating and she ask her abuela if she could go outside "Ok" she said "pero tienes cuidado" she said, but mama didn't heard her.

Sharing published books with translanguaging helped both Marco and Luis to appropriate translanguaging strategies. For instance, both children used family identifiers, such as abuela, tías, and hermanos, as well as capturing cultural precision through food names that cannot be easily translated, such as pupusas and Popeye's, and used dialogue to capture authentic linguistic practices of a character, such as Luis's abuela speaking Spanish. In turn, several children described not knowing how to spell a word in Spanish as the reason for not writing in Spanish; thus, they defaulted to English, in which they felt more comfortable spelling.

**Bilingual Storytime.** We perceived pressure to use English because some storytimes drew more families that felt most comfortable in English. For example, on some exit surveys, parents requested "maybe more time to learn/practice the words in Spanish" or "for parents/kids who don't yet speak Spanish, translate songs before singing." In contrast, no Spanish-speaking parents ever requested more support for understanding English activities. These surveys illustrated that English-speaking families felt entitled to always understand what was happening in a way that primarily Spanish-speaking families did not express. Because we wanted to create a well-attended program, we wrestled with how much to attend to the voices of these English-speaking families.

Once, a college student facilitator suggested that children did not pay attention to a book we read because it was in Spanish, suggesting we should have read it in English first. This prompted Laura to record in the research journal: "How can we have a bilingual storytime that promotes and celebrates Spanish and is still engaging to monolingual English-speaking children? (Should we care about that?) ... I want to avoid dumbing down Spanish for the benefit of English speakers." A review of several of our storytime plans illustrated this perceived need to respond to English-dominant families. For

example, the transcript for the planned read-aloud of *Little Chancas* showed that when we selected English and Spanish sentences to tell the story through both languages, we still ended up planning 60% of the talk in English. We faced a constant challenge of selecting and centering Spanish without centering the desires of English-dominant participants. After our second year, our team determined that to decenter the desires of English-speaking families, it would be helpful to start Bilingual Storytime programs at library branches more accessible to predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhoods.

**Comparative Analysis.** Both sites faced real and imagined pulls towards English. While white, English-speaking families and college volunteers drove this pull towards English at Bilingual Storytime, the same phenomenon occurred at Autores Fuertes where Latinx children from Spanish-speaking families defaulted to English even when provided with Spanish or bilingual materials to scaffold their writing. Despite our intentional translanguaging approach, participants at both sites raced Stephanie and Kate at Autores Fuertes and Laura and several of the college students at Bilingual Storytime as white and therefore English-preferring speakers. While we are all bilingual, we know that this racialized reading of their audience affected the participants' language choices.

We noted that in both sites, extensive use of Spanish occurred due to planning, rather than naturally emerging. At Autores Fuertes, Stephanie and Kate brought in textual models to support children during the revising phase to incorporate Spanish into their stories, because a welcoming translanguaging stance was not enough for children to do so on their own. At Bilingual Storytime, decentering English required specific planning about which language to use for which purpose and checking the plans to ensure they achieved a balance of languages. Even with this planning, all researchers documented persistent use of English among participants in both sites, and some children were not employing all their linguistic resources.

### ***High Staff/Volunteer Turnover Challenged Efforts at Translanguaging***

In both community spaces, we noted the high rate of turnover of paid staff and volunteers and irregular attendance of staff and children. At times, this inconsistency undermined our efforts at translanguaging pedagogies and ideologies.

**Autores Fuertes.** When we began our work at Autores Fuertes, the site director was a white woman who spoke English as her first language and learned Spanish in college. At times, she voiced and practiced standardized language ideologies that privileged prescribed, "correct" Spanish. For instance, she stated that the site's radio station remained inactive because there was no adult native Spanish-speaker on staff to correct the children's "mistakes" in Spanish. This site director believed that because the site assessed the children's writing each semester, the children should write only in English. Volunteers came at different times and were not always familiar with the topic, children, or norms of the center. However, as the project progressed, a new project director, Natalia, a bilingual immigrant from Honduras, was hired. Immediate changes in language practices at the center were evident. For instance, Natalia formed a circle with the children during snack time, asking each child how their school day had been and chatting informally, all in Spanish. Although this recent change has facilitated more translanguaging, we note that we cannot ensure that new directors and teachers will take up such a translanguaging approach.

**Bilingual Storytime.** While some storytime facilitators worked with Bilingual Storytime consistently during their college experience, Laura faced the constant challenge of a rotation of volunteers. While Cinthya received a small research stipend, all other students were volunteers and participated less consistently. Preparing for each storytime program involved introducing the facilitators to the theme, materials, and plan for that storytime. None of the volunteers had previous

coursework that introduced them to the theory and practice of translanguaging. Laura struggled with orienting them to the translanguaging approach, especially in the limited time afforded by the short planning meetings with each storytime team before the next event. While she did not want to script how students should lead each activity, she ended up providing specific guidance for using both languages, especially for students who had less confidence with Spanish. Furthermore, she usually took on the translanguaging read-aloud herself. Laura documented in the research journal that without adequate professional development to orient volunteers to the translanguaging approach, some English-dominant volunteers were underprepared to use Spanish and/or defaulted to English when they facilitated activities or informally talked to children.

These challenges illustrate how relying on inconsistent volunteers made it challenging to enact translanguaging. First, some volunteers had less familiarity with translanguaging in their own language practices, so they could not employ it as naturally as more experienced bilingual volunteers. Secondly, even when volunteers felt comfortable translanguaging, without a strong theoretical foundation and a language ideology supportive of translanguaging, they did not know whether, when, or how best to employ it while facilitating literacy activities.

**Comparative Analysis.** The turnover of staff and volunteers at both sites presented challenges related to translanguaging and establishing routines for the activities. At Autores Fuertes, both administrative staff and volunteers experienced frequent turnover, and with each change in personnel, there was a period of orientation and a new establishment of norms and programming. In terms of volunteers, there were frequently college students, parents, and other community members who came to volunteer, but few were permanently connected to one particular workshop. At Bilingual Storytime, the amount of time spent orienting new volunteers and introducing them to translanguaging norms was also significant and frequently disrupted the intent of the project.

The most obvious challenge the turnover caused was the inability to grow together with other volunteers, students, and administrators, as we learned about how translanguaging worked in the spaces. The turnover resulted in a preference for monolingual and monoglossic language ideologies centered on English. It was difficult to maintain a translanguaging norm among adults when the adults had variable attendance, and we did not have sustained contact with them. However, this did force us to remind ourselves that for the children, translanguaging is a constant reality, not just for the few hours we were with them. The turnover among adults in these two projects shows the imperative to ensure the translanguaging efforts are not uniquely attached to us as researchers but are instead continually drawn from the community itself, regardless of who reads and writes with them.

## Discussion

In this study, we compared two community literacy projects that took a translanguaging approach. This approach allowed us to document and interpret shared affordances and limitations of translanguaging across two diverse and distant sites.

### Translanguaging and Community Spaces

In several ways, our findings align with prior research. First, we experienced community spaces as more flexible and open to translanguaging approaches (Alvarez & Alvarez, 2016; Rodriguez, 2019) when contrasted with our experiences as teachers and researchers in schools, including bilingual schools. We did not face testing or curriculum pressures, and we could design our programs to celebrate diverse bilingual literature or inquire into and write about children's language use.

Secondly, as in the research discussed in our literature review, we battled the constant creep of English despite our intentional translanguaging stance. English took precedence due to the language preferences and proficiencies of children and staff/volunteers. We suggest that this tension may have arisen as a result of *who* is translanguaging and *why* we translanguaged. The context of translanguaging matters greatly, and issues such as the flexibility and structure of the programs, as well as the extent to which they resemble school in the minds of the children, impact the potential of translanguaging.

### **Translanguaging, Structure, and Flexibility**

Descriptions of translanguaging often include terms like “dynamic” (Flores & García, 2013, p. 255), “flexible” (Guzula et al., 2016, p. 8), “natural and free” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. xi), and “natural flow” or “corriente” (García et al., 2017, p. xi), referencing the free-flowing, unrestricted use of language. Thus, a translanguaging stance aligns with flexible educational approaches and language philosophies. However, the comparison of these projects showed that translanguaging occurred in both more and less structured environments and that in some cases, the structure was vital to persisting with translanguaging (as opposed to defaulting to all English). For example, translanguaging occurred in less structured moments at Autores Fuertes as children, their families, and researchers talked. But it also occurred in highly planned activities at Bilingual Storytime like the translanguaging read-aloud (Kelly, 2022).

In many cases, structure and planning supported, rather than constrained, translanguaging. Both projects included some participants who felt more comfortable using English and/or had no prior experience in an educational context that encouraged them to use two languages together. In both projects, we intended translanguaging to push back against monolingual language ideologies by celebrating Spanish. But to accomplish that goal, we needed participants to use Spanish. We could not simply welcome their home language practices, if those were primarily English, or accept their initial writing if they imported beliefs from school that their final products needed to be all in English. Thus, we had to explicitly plan for both languages. Laura explicitly planned translanguaging read-alouds by underlining key Spanish sentences in the book and adding post-it notes with English clarifications (Kelly, 2022). Stephanie explicitly supported students to increase Spanish in their writing through modeling with children’s literature and explicitly asking them during writing conferences what words or phrases might make more sense in Spanish.

This level of planning seemed necessary for children learning one of the languages to prevent them from defaulting to their most comfortable language. It may also be necessary for children who comfortably use both languages, but who believe they should keep their languages separate or that all their languages are not equally valuable in an educational context. Our experiences with planning and translanguaging align with the recommendations of García and Kleyn (2016), who advocated for educators to intentionally plan how, when, and why they blend languages.

### **Translanguaging, Resistance, and Language Dominance**

Translanguaging is grounded in resistant, heteroglossic language practices of communities and homes. Those practices eschew conformity to standardized, authoritative language policies, as enforced in schools or by a nation-state. Yet we saw that promoting flexible language use allowed, at times, for a default to English. But is this always a problem? Many children and families at both sites were bilingual. English is one of their languages. Perhaps the hegemony of English is disrupted just by allowing the choice of which language to use.

We found that the translanguaging approach did not always decenter English to the extent we had hoped, similar to what other researchers have found in out-of-school translanguaging spaces (Gast

et al., 2017; Pastor, 2007). Guerrero (2021) has argued that the failure to protect space and status for the minoritized or less socially dominant language is a pedagogical weakness of the translanguaging approach. It may be unrealistic to expect “equal” status in language use or children’s language ideologies without a more explicit intervention beyond a translanguaging stance.

Also, translanguaging stances problematize notions of proficiency, yet at Autores Fuertes, we noted criticism of the children’s Spanish. For example, the children often claimed that they could not write in Spanish, the director claimed that the children could not host a radio station because she could not correct their Spanish mistakes, and the assistant director described children as not being fluent in either language or their languagelessness (Rosa, 2016). In turn, at times, Bilingual Storytime volunteers’ Spanish was evaluated as not fluent. As theory, practice, and pedagogy, translanguaging illuminates the complex and rich language practices of people, specifically racialized, multilingual children and adults. Yet we have noted that the ability for translanguaging pedagogies to challenge and change the ideological stances of educators and other actors, who may be observing the translanguaging practices of racialized children, seems limited.

### **Translanguaging and Multimodality**

As affirmed in previous literacy research, multimodal literacies welcome bilingual and immigrant students to express and interpret complex experiences beyond the bounds of print language (Campano & Low, 2011). A current movement in translanguaging research and theory is to account for modes of communication outside of spoken or written language (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Kusters et al., 2017; Lin, 2019). For instance, across both sites, communication beyond words was prevalent and vital for meaning-making. To expand the concept of linguistic repertoire, an essential concept underpinning translanguaging theory, scholars have proposed terms such as spatialized and semiotic repertoire (Canagarajah, 2017; Kusters et al., 2017) to account for this complexity of communication. Others write about multiliteracies to describe how children enact literacy beyond a range of print-based skills (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Given the multiple semiotic processes we observed in both cases among facilitators and children, we echo calls for increased attention to multimodality in language teaching and research (Early et al., 2015).

### **Researcher and Educator Positionality in Translanguaging**

Given the xenophobic and racist culture of the United States, particularly the marginalization of Latinx immigrants and Spanish-speaking communities, it is imperative to examine the positionalities of the translanguagers. In our projects, they were children, researchers, and volunteers. Recent work in raciolinguistics (Rosa, 2019) showed the intersection of racialized positions and language performance. By looking at our translanguaging work with children, we hoped that children whose languages and cultures were marginalized and minoritized could more freely share their entire language repertoire. Furthermore, we intended that they would freely learn to critique larger ideological structures that contribute to this marginalization. However, this did not always come naturally from our lessons or activities.

Three coauthors of this article and lead researchers of our projects identify as white. All four are bilingual speakers of English and Spanish; however, the three white authors learned English as children in the United States and Spanish as adults. Thus, we occupy, both racially and linguistically, a space in US society where we have been offered a lifetime of unearned benefits stemming from how our races and our languages have been perceived. For example, white people who are multilingual are often considered to possess a talent or a skill that is desired and valuable; people of color and immigrants who are multilingual are often considered linguistically deficient in schools and communities (Flores & García, 2017). In our data, conversations frequently arose with the children as

a result of this dynamic: a reluctance to speak or write in Spanish on the part of the children or a celebration of our bilingualism as white adults by other adults at the research sites. Moving forward, we intend to engage these conversations to undermine the dominant and dangerous ideologies of language, race, and even citizenship status, recommending that all translanguaging researchers do the same.

## Significance and Needs for Future Research

The strength of our study lies in the comparison of two distinct research sites; we documented the affordances and limitations we analyze in this paper at different sites, with different participants, and in separately designed research projects. The comparison of these projects points to promising lines of future inquiry. Future researchers might explore how the purpose of and participants in translanguaging affect the experience of it. For example, how is translanguaging different for children in bilingual homes who commonly translanguage and for children in monolingual homes who use translanguaging to support their learning of a new language? Additional research could explore translanguaging as resistance and how children (and others) develop language ideologies in the context of translanguaging educational spaces. Finally, we argue for more attention to the promising intersection of translanguaging and multimodality and the development of pedagogical approaches that blend the two approaches.

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## An Empirical Study on Syllabus Design and English Language Teaching at Calicut University

Jithin Devassy

### Abstract

The study investigates English education in Kerala with the support of the communicative approach. This research evaluates the effectiveness of the course “The Four Skills of Communication” from students’ and teachers’ points of view. This is a common course taught in different colleges affiliated with Calicut University. This research investigates the English textbook and syllabus for its ability to help students improve their proficiency in the English language. This empirical study observes the development of language skills of learners and highlights the positive and negative aspects of this syllabus and textbook. As the course name indicates “the four language skills,” the paper evaluates the language skills taught by the teachers as instructed by the course developers. This study is an enlightening lesson for course and textbook developers to check whether the course and the syllabus are relevant for improving students’ proficiency in English.

**Keywords:** syllabus design, curriculum development, English language teaching, textbook analysis, communicative approach

### Introduction

This study explores the effectiveness of the English syllabus and language teaching in Sree Kerala Varma College Thrissur, governed by Calicut University. Calicut University is one of the most prominent universities in Kerala, India. There are more than 105 colleges governed by the University, which has taken a keen interest in improving the English proficiency of students. Kerala, one of the states of India known for its high literacy rates, has been able to contribute tremendously to the field of English language education. The origin of education in Kerala can be traced back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which witnessed the period of the Sangam age (4<sup>th</sup> B.C.– 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D.). Kerala has also marked its presence in Indian history through its spice trade with other countries.

Though Kerala is one of the smallest states of India, consisting of only 1.18% of the total area of the country, the state plays a seminal role in the field of education. Kerala enjoys the highest literacy rate (93.91%) of all the states in India. When English education started in Kerala, the state was divided into three provinces: Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore. The development of education was slow in the Malabar region compared to the other two provinces.

One of the most important factors which helped the flourishing of English education was the influence of Christian missionaries. They paved the way for the development of English and education in Kerala. They introduced English education to raise the standard of living of people and found the education of women to be very significant, contributing to the development of society because women spent most of their time at home, allowing them opportunities to teach their children. Thus, the development of society may be attributed to women. Herman Gundert, who was part of the Basal German Evangelical Mission, also took the initiative for the development of English education in Malabar. Thereafter Kerala witnessed major developments in the field of English education. New colleges, universities, and schools came into existence because of the influence of Christianity.

## Theoretical Background

The communicative approach is quite popular in the field of syllabus design and language teaching methods. The communicative syllabus is one of the most prominent syllabi in the field of syllabus design. As the name indicates, the syllabus stresses communication skills such as giving advice and making requests. The main aim of this method is to equip the learner not only with linguistic knowledge but also with communicative competence. Communicative competence enables the learner to use a particular language in a specific context and deals with different requirements of the language. It not only deals with grammar rules but also deals with social and cultural environments.

The communicative syllabus is related to Wilkins's (1976) functional-notional syllabus, which emphasizes the social and situational aspects of language, dealing with what to say and when to use a language. Hence, the functional-notional syllabus necessarily includes communication skills. The Council of Europe adopted Wilkins's work to develop a communicative syllabus. As the name indicates, function refers to the language functions which constitute communication. Even though the communicative syllabus was accepted by many, some scholars did not give it a warm welcome. Widdowson (1971) supported the syllabus in the beginning, saying, "There seems no reason at all why we should not, for example, say 'For this course, we will select undertakings, promises, warnings, definitions, classifications' and so on rather than 'For this course, we will teach the simple present, present continuous, count and mass nouns and so on'" (p. 39). However, two years later he said the educators have to be very careful in accepting the communicative syllabus as a universally accepted syllabus (1971). One of the main reasons for his comment was that the communicative syllabus includes many practical risks. The syllabus is limited only to a specific situation. Considering these aspects, the method cannot be accepted as a universally accepted one.

The communicative syllabus is framed following the requirements of the learners, helping them to attain communicative competence. *Communicative competence* enables the learners to understand grammatical knowledge and helps them use the language based on a given situation. Communicative competence helps the learner to employ language appropriately and accurately. The authenticity of the materials is an essential factor in the communicative syllabus. The method checks and assures the authenticity of the material. The syllabus mainly contains communicative tasks and helps the learner to improve communication skills.

The communicative syllabus has gained considerable attention over the years. Currently, most of the syllabi used for second language learners are communicative. Maley (1984) has discussed the role of teachers in the communicative syllabus, explaining that the teacher is just a facilitator who controls the environment and provides a suitable environment for learning the language. Teachers play different roles in the communicative syllabus. First, Maley (1984) talks about the shift from the teacher-oriented syllabus to a learner-oriented one. Later he talks about group activity. He says that group activity can help the learners acquire the language, and teachers should extend their support to the idea of group activities.

Teachers have to provide a relaxed atmosphere for learning because it helps the learner to learn the language better. Learning takes place when the mind is relaxed. For instance, the misconceptions about errors. People consider errors to be negative in learning, but it is worth considering that errors are a necessary part of learning. When somebody makes mistakes, then that shows he/she is learning. The teacher's job is just to help the learner achieve his/her goal, often through providing them some time to work so that they may come up with a positive output. The present research adopts the communicative approach for two reasons. The first reason is that this is the latest method used in second language learning, and secondly, this method highlights language skills. Since the current research also deals with language skills, it could be evaluated using communicative syllabus yardsticks.

## **Review of the Literature**

With its emphasis on effectively communicating in a given language, the communicative approach shifts from being teacher-oriented to student-centered. In this approach, communication skills play an important role. Teachers are just facilitators in the class who help the students learn a new language. The primary duty of the teacher is to prepare a suitable atmosphere for the students to learn a language. Learning responsibility is fully based on the learners. Hence, this approach lays more emphasis on the learners rather than the teachers. In this approach, the grammar part is not ignored as it explains grammatical rules based on real-life situations. Communicative language teaching employs different types of tasks to improve communicative aspects of language like group discussions, games, and so on.

This method fulfills the primary duty of language, which is communication. In this approach, a language can be considered as learned only when the student can communicate with someone else using the language. The method encourages interaction with students rather than interaction with teachers. The method also examines the language use of the learners because the material is prepared based on the language of the learner. Hence, it can be inferred that this method takes into account the interest of the students, and it can be regarded as the most relevant aspect of this approach. Brumfit (1979) explained that communicative language teaching is not merely a technical job. The implementation of this method demands genuine feelings and interest. The communicative language teaching approach teaches the students to progress from simple to complex tasks. The main advocates of this approach are Wilkins (1976), Widdowson (1978), Candlin (1973), and Brumfit (1979). Other British applied linguists also helped in building the theoretical foundation of communicative language teaching. Wilkins's (1976) book on the notional syllabus became one of the most important textbooks for the formation of communicative language teaching. The notional-functional approach and the functional approach are two other terms used to refer to communicative language teaching. No method is unique in its features because each method influences others. Like the other methods, the communicative language teaching method also shows close connections with other methods. One of the most important concepts related to this method is Dell Hymes's (1972) notion of *communicative*

*competence*. This idea was contrary to Noam Chomsky's theory of *competence* (1965). Chomsky's competence deals with the abstract ability that helps the learner to speak grammatically correct sentences. It also deals with a homogeneous community and the community that knows the language perfectly. However, Hymes's communicative competence mainly stresses communication and culture. This cultural aspect was neglected in Chomsky's concept. This approach is important for this research because it includes all the language skills equally. This approach is practiced widely in different fields of education, especially in France and Britain. Textbooks and syllabi are framed based on the concepts of communicative language teaching. This method is an extension of the notional-functional approach. The ultimate goal of communicative language teaching is not simply communication, but rather communicative competence. Communicative competence does not mean only the attainment of grammatical rules; rather, it enables the learner to understand when and where to use these rules. Communicative competence helps the learner to understand the different language functions in different contexts. As mentioned earlier, this approach deals with all the language skills—reading, writing, listening and speaking—in an equal manner.

### **Analysis of the Syllabus and Textbook**

As one of the major universities in Kerala, Calicut University was an obvious choice for the focus of this study. The university takes the initiative for the development of syllabi and textbooks for students' progress in the English language for all the colleges affiliated with the university. My study investigates the current scenario in Calicut University concerning the language skills in the university. The study examines the textbooks and syllabi that are related to language skills in colleges, with Sree Kerala Varma College being selected as the site for data collection. Students from Bachelor of Arts degrees in Political Science, Sanskrit, and Functional English were used for the data collection.

Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the data from the participants. One questionnaire was prepared for professors to learn their opinions on the effectiveness of the syllabus, so their questionnaire contained questions related to the syllabus. The students received a different questionnaire that focused on whether they can learn English language in the classroom in an effective manner. The student questionnaire covered information related to their professor's teaching methods, textbook details, classroom settings, etc. The following data gives a clear idea about the background of students.

**Table 1.**  
*Students' background information*

<b>Course</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>B.A. Functional English</b>	18	24.66
<b>B.A. Political Science</b>	34	46.58
<b>B.A. Sanskrit</b>	21	28.77
<b>Total</b>	73	100

Data was collected from English teachers and students alike to gather information about English language teaching. The study concentrated on common courses taught in the colleges under Calicut University because the same course is taught in more than a hundred colleges.

## Hypothesis of the Study

The study is conducted based on the following hypotheses.

1. The existing syllabi of common courses do not contribute to the development of the language skills of the learners.
2. The communication aspect is often neglected in the syllabus.
3. The teaching methods are traditional, thus are not effective for learning.
4. Students find the English language complex because they have an assumption that English is the most difficult language to learn.
5. Students do not get ample opportunities to speak English and are not provided with the scope and space for improving their spoken proficiency.

## Methodology

The field study was conducted at different places in Kerala to analyze the syllabus and teaching methods. The data was collected from Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur which is affiliated with Calicut University. Regular field visits were made to collect the data and get a thorough understanding of the curriculum. The data collection commenced with request letters addressed to the concerned authorities to gain permission to access the necessary information. After getting permission to collect data from different sources, the minutes prepared by the Board of Studies Members were collected. These minutes helped to understand the changes that were brought about in different courses, textbooks, and the syllabi over the years. This was one of the important factors that influenced the research.

The minutes also helped to review the changes made in the syllabus and compare those changes concerning developments in society. Have they upgraded the syllabus and textbooks? Were the professors aware of the current teaching methods? Has there been a change in the syllabus according to the latest developments in language teaching? These are the main questions that this research was concerned about. Students from different backgrounds were the population for my research. This study was based on the responses collected from 73 students. Responses were also collected from two professors regarding syllabus and language teaching in Kerala. The textbook related to language skills was also subjected to scrutiny. The research found that there is one textbook which is introduced to improve the student's English language proficiency, titled *The Four Skills for Communication*. The syllabus of the text is also analyzed to get a clear idea about the needs of the learners. The following section shows how the syllabus and its classification are framed to improve students' proficiency in English.

## Classification of Syllabus

There is only one course taught in Calicut University for its undergraduate program that is related to language skills. *The Four Skills for Communication* by Josh Sreedharan (2016) is taught in the first semester of the degree program. The course, The Four Language Skills, with course code ENGI A01, is the single English course taught at the colleges governed by Calicut University. The syllabus is classified into five systematic sections:

1. Objectives of the Course
2. Course Description
3. Evaluation
4. Core Text

## 5. Appendix

The key target is to empower the students' linguistic proficiency and skills. Vocabulary, being an integral element of linguistic savvy, is the pillar of this course. The students are trained to build their vocabulary bank, which is undeniably essential for smooth communication skills. These factors enable students to use the English language systematically.

The syllabus delineates the time allotment for each module. Ten hours are allocated for the first module, titled "English for Communication." Fifteen hours are allotted for primary skills that comprise the second module in the textbook. The third module focuses on secondary skills, for which fifteen hours are allocated. The fourth module concerns grammar, for which twenty hours have been allotted. Twelve hours are allotted for the evaluation of students. Overall, seventy-two hours are allotted for the course. The assessment is primarily performed based on the semester exam. There is also a classification in the grading system whereby 80% of the marking scheme is obtained from the written tests, and 20% of marks are taken from continuous evaluation.

Continuous evaluation includes attendance, assignments, seminar papers, viva voce, and test papers. 50% of the scheduled marks are allotted for test papers, 25% for attendance, and 25% for seminars, assignments, and viva voce. Letter grades are used to evaluate the students' performance through the following system: A=>90%, B=85-89%, C=80-84%, D= 75-75%, and E= below 75%. Attendance grades are also marked, and letters are used to show the performance of the students: A=3.5-4.0 equates with Excellent, B=2.50-3.49 is equivalent to Very Good, C=1.50-2.49 expresses Good, D=0.50-1.49 indicates Passing, and E=0.49 means Poor performance. Each of these have grade points of 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. A grade of D is the cutoff for passing the exam, while a C is the cutoff for passing the internal exam; if any student gets a grade of E, then he/she has to retake the course.

The course comprises four modules. These are as follows:

1. English for Communication
2. Primary Skills
3. Secondary Skills
4. Grammar

*The Four Skills for Communication* (Sreedharan, Cambridge University Press, 2014) is not only a relatively new textbook in the field of common courses, but it is the core textbook for first-year students of degree programs. Introduced in 2014, this book is the only textbook which deals with four language skills. The textbook starts with the topic "English for Communication." The first section primarily outlines the types of communications like verbal, nonverbal, network communications and participant-based communications. The first section also elucidates the different functions of language and emphasizes communication skills. The module presents English as a global language.

The second module mainly explains the kinds of languages and language families, and includes charts to elucidate the language families. It also differentiates between formal and informal English and stresses primary skills, including listening and speaking. On the one hand, listening skills involve listening to speech, lectures, and conversations, making them the main tasks mentioned in the syllabus. On the other hand, it includes multiple functions of language such as requesting, greeting, seeking permission, and reporting. The module puts emphasis on English phonetics, pronunciation, and word stress, starting with an introduction to listening, and it clearly distinguishes between listening and hearing. The important points are provided in bullet points, and there are also symbols of headphones which show that students have to use the CD to listen to the exact pronunciation. Exercises come at the end of the chapter. There are mainly three sections in this module:

1. Listening to a conversation.
2. Listening to speech.
3. Listening to lectures.

The module also highlights the importance of speaking skills. The inclusion of tables and pictures differentiates the chief points in each section. The exercises for each chapter come at the end of the chapter.

The third module incorporates secondary skills, such as writing and reading. Reading skills include the reading of poems, essays, news reports, letters, and online content. Charts and advertisements are part of this exercise. The writing skills comprise letter writing, blogs, notes, and reports. It also includes paragraph writing, resumes, and email writing.

The next module is related to English grammar, which primarily discusses subject-verb agreement, phrases, clauses, articles, voices, and idioms. The appendix concludes the syllabus with the book's title, author's name, publisher's name and year of publication. The glossary is given in the last two sections of this module and are related to prescribed poems and essays. Sections titled, "About the Poem" and "About the Essay" are present in each chapter of the module.

The next module is writing skills and includes writing paragraphs, sentences, reports, letters, e-mails, blogs, and resumes. It also talks about different types of sentences. Various examples are provided to explain the writing style. In letter writing, importance is given to different formats used in the process. The exercise task comes at the end of each chapter. Tables are used in the textbook to elaborate the concepts.

The last module is grammar and pronunciation. The grammar section primarily deals with tenses, articles, phrases, clauses, sentences, idioms, voices, and word classes. Tables are provided in each chapter to explain the concepts better. The next section is "Pronunciation." This chapter starts with sounds and symbols in English with examples. The module contains a CD-ROM, and it is referred to with a symbol throughout the module. The module also addresses phonetics, pronunciation, vowels, consonants, and word stress.

The last section of the textbook is the appendix, where the vowels and consonants are presented, along with examples to demonstrate the pronunciation of each sound in English. The short description in the last section of the book sheds light on the expected output of the textbook. It says that the textbook equips students to be efficient in the four language skills. This approach makes teaching and learning enjoyable. The textbook covers various topics related to language skills. The textbook follows a functional and holistic approach to learning English.

### **Syllabus Analysis by the Participants**

Two professors responded to the questions regarding the syllabus. The first professor who responded had degrees of M.A. and B.Ed, and the second had an M.A and Ph.D. One of the professors specialized in ecocriticism, which would not appear to have a strong relationship to language pedagogy. One of them held a permanent position, and the other held an adjunct position. One of them had only eight months of experience in teaching. One taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels while the other taught only degree students. She was a guest faculty in the department. Neither professor had undergone any training to teach the English language.

The professors were not satisfied with the aims and objectives of the course because they felt that the syllabus was rushed and needed more time to cover the material. They also said that they could not execute the syllabus properly owing to the shortage of time. When questions were asked as to whether the syllabus was helpful, they said that it was adequate, but the problem lay with the current syllabus, which did not provide them with ample time to teach. So they had suggested extending the time into a second semester also. They were also not happy with the course plan because they could not follow a particular method. However, they did say that the course was relevant, as it stressed communication skills.

The professors also thought that the syllabus could enhance the language. But most of the time, they could not complete the syllabus for lack of time. When questions were asked about the most important language skills, the professors said that all language skills were equally important. The negative aspect of the syllabus was that it gave little importance to the modules. The educators just touched on the concepts without delving deep into them. The teachers often asked students to speak and write so that they could improve their language skills.

Both professors agreed entirely on the importance of training, because that would help them improve their classroom teaching. Students could not thoroughly understand the ideas prescribed in the syllabus, although they understood the concepts to a certain extent. The professors also indicated that there had been changes in the last five years, and these modifications had made the syllabus better. They agreed that they sometimes asked students to memorize the answers. They also encouraged students to use their creative skills. The best quality of a teacher was to alleviate the students' fear when they used the language and help them feel confident. The teachers also encouraged students to put their best in their overall development and advocated for prioritizing the students' speaking and listening skills.

The professors also used various methods to improve English grammar, asking students to do exercises and frame sentences. They made use of the workbook also, assigning homework from and providing assignments for students to improve their language. Every teacher kept a copy of the syllabus, too, although it was felt that the current syllabus was too vague for a short semester, as it lacked proper orientation. The strength of the syllabus was that it gave everything in a capsule manner. This helped the students to learn everything in a shorter period of time, although there was no proper order to teach language skills. The teachers also suggested that the training program should be given more importance, as it helps them to teach communication skills. The following sum up the major findings from the interviews and questionnaires.

### **Findings from the Syllabus Analysis**

1. Professors' areas of specialization are unrelated to language pedagogy.
2. The aims and objectives are not met adequately.
3. Professors are not trained to teach the course.
4. Time constraint is a significant problem.
5. Professors do not follow any particular methodology to teach the course.
6. The modules are not given enough importance.
7. Professors are not happy with the course plan.
8. In most cases, they cannot complete the syllabus.
9. Students are asked to memorize the answers.

## Student’s Responses on the Textbook

This study investigates the textbook prescribed for the students in common courses. The evaluation of the textbook was done mainly using a questionnaire that was given to teachers and students. Seventy three students responded regarding the textbook. The questionnaire is divided into five sections including background information, interests of the students, classroom teaching, textbook information, and teaching method information. Students of various ages participated in the data collection. The following table shows the ages of the students.

**Table 2.**  
*Age Group of Students*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17	11	15.07
18	52	71.23
19	9	12.33
20	1	1.37
<b>Total</b>	73	100

The study also obtained the students’ language backgrounds and documented that a majority of the students (62 students) were from a Malayalam-medium background and only 11 students were from an English background.

The paper also looked at the students’ parents’ backgrounds. Parent educational level is divided into 5 sections: (A) below 10<sup>th</sup>, (B) 10<sup>th</sup> pass, (C) 12<sup>th</sup> pass, (E) degree pass, and (E) above degree. The following table shows the range of their backgrounds.

**Table 3.**  
*Parents’ Educational Background*

Education	Fathers’ Education	Mothers’ Education
A	12	6
B	41	26
C	6	22
D	4	11
E	1	1
NA	9	7
<b>Total</b>	73	73

As the table shows, most of the parents have the qualification of 10<sup>th</sup> pass.

Students’ proficiency is also one of the critical factors for the study. The study included students from various backgrounds so that their language proficiencies could be evaluated. Most of them said that they were not fluent in English, with only 18 claiming fluency. Moreover, the common course was the same across different disciplines. The following table shows the fluency of the students.

**Table 4.**  
*English Fluency of the Students*

English Fluency of the Students	
Yes	55
No	18

## Interests of the Students

One of the important aspects of this work was to take into account the interest of the students to see if their interest could lead to learning the English language. A variety of questions were asked to understand the interests of the students. Students were given four options to mark their responses. Table 5 shows the responses of the students.

**Table 5.**  
*Students' responses on their interests*

Sl No	Questions	Definitely	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Do you want to study English?	34(46.58)	39(53.42)		
2	Which of the language skills do you want to learn more?	7(9.59)	48(65.75)	8(10.96)	10(13.70)
3	Do you follow any particular techniques to learn English?	14(19.18)	51(69.86)	8(10.96)	
4	Do you find English a difficult subject?	18(24.66)	55(75.34)		
5	Do you read English newspapers?	10(13.70)	55(75.34)	5(6.85)	3(4.11)
6	Do you watch English movies?	10(13.70)	41(56.16)	15(20.55)	7(9.59)
7	Do you listen to English news?	14(19.18)	52(71.23)	6(8.22)	1(1.37)
8	Do you have access to internet?	64(86.30)	9(13.70)		
9	Do you read books written in English?	9(12.33)	49(67.12)	12(16.44)	3(4.11)
10	Do you get enough opportunities to talk in English in your class?	10(13.70)	40(54.79)	16(21.92)	7(9.59)

The question number section shows the serial number of the questions asked in this section of the questionnaire. There were 10 questions in the section. The first question was, "Do you want to study English?" All the students marked positive responses to this question. Thirty-four students said that they definitely want to study English, and 39 students said 'Yes' that they need to study English and their percentages were 46.58%. The next question was about the language skills that students wanted to learn more about. 48 students marked that they needed to learn speaking skills more than the other three skills, and their percentage constituted 65.75%. The next question was about the techniques used to learn English. Fifty-one students said that they sometimes followed particular methods to improve their English language, while 14 students said that they did not follow any particular methods to learn English.

The next question was "Do you find English as a difficult subject?" 55 students said that they did not find English to be a difficult subject, whereas 18 students said that they find English to be a difficult subject. The next question was about the habit of reading English newspapers. 55 students replied that they read English newspapers, and their percentage is 75.34%. Ten students reported that they did not read English newspapers. There was a question regarding English movies. 41 students

responded that they sometimes watched English movies, whereas 10 students answered that they did not watch English movies. There was a question about watching English news, and most of the students marked that they sometimes watched English news and the highest percentage of students who watched English news was 71.23%.

The next question concerned the accessibility of the internet to the students. 64 students responded that they have access to the internet. The next question was about the habit of reading books. 49 students said that they sometimes read books written in English and their percentage is 69.12%. The last question in this section was related to the opportunities that students get in the class to speak English. 40 students marked that they sometimes got opportunities to speak in the class, and 10 students responded that they never got chances to speak English in the class and their percentages are 54.79% and 13.70% respectively.

### **Classroom Teaching Information**

One of the significant phases of language learning involves classroom teaching. Thus the study included questions related to the classroom. The following table shows the details about the classroom teaching of the common course taught in various colleges of Calicut University. There were 12 questions in this section, which again had four options as possible answers. Seventy-three students participated in the data collection from different streams. The following table shows the responses of the students.

**Table 6.**  
*Students' Responses on Classroom Teaching*

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Is the medium of instruction in English?	2(2.74)	40(54.79)	13(17.81)	18(24.66)
2	Do you understand the lessons taught in English?	4(5.48)	18(24.66)	30(41.10)	21(28.77)
3	Do you find your teacher's method interesting to study the subject?	5(6.85)	38(52.05)	20(27.40)	10(13.70)
4	Do you find the lessons prescribed for you interesting?	8(10.96)	44(60.27)	13(17.81)	8(10.96)
5	Do you find that your lessons contain difficult words?	2(2.74)	55(75.34)	10(13.70)	6(8.22)
6	Do you like the way the teacher teaches English?	7(9.59)	30(41.10)	23(31.51)	13(17.81)
7	Do you think that the English taught in the class is useful?	3(4.11)	17(23.29)	15(20.55)	38(52.05)
8	Do you get any chance to speak in English in the class room?	5(6.85)	38(52.05)	15(20.55)	15(20.55)
9	How many English classes do you have in a week?	2(2.74)	2(2.27)	4(5.48)	65(89.04)
10	Do you think those classes are sufficient?	8(10.96)	20(27.40)	15(20.55)	30(41.10)
11	How many English classes would you like to have per week?	3(4.11)	5(6.85)	18(24.66)	47(64.38)
12	How many of the language skills are practiced in the class room?		6(8.22)	36(49.32)	31(42.47)

The first question in this section dealt with the medium of instruction in the classroom to teach the textbook. Two students (2.74%) stated that the medium of instruction was never in English in the classroom. Forty students (54.79%) observed that the teachers used English as the medium of

instruction occasionally. Thirty students (17.81%) opined that teachers used English as the medium of instruction in the classroom frequently. 18 students found that teachers had always used English as the medium of instruction.

The second question dealt with the lessons taught in the class. In this regard, whether the students understood the lesson was worth interrogation. Four students (5.48%) responded that they failed to understand the lessons taught in the classroom, whereas 18 students (24.66 %) responded that they understood the lessons occasionally. However, 30 students (41.9%) said that they often understood the lessons taught in the classroom. Lastly, 21 students (28.77%) agreed that the lesson taught in the classroom was always understood.

The next question revolved around the method used in the classroom to teach the course. Five students (6.85%) said that they felt little interest in the method that was adopted by the teachers, while 38 students (52.05%) agreed that the method was interesting on an occasional basis and 20 students, who constituted 27.40% of the total, opined that often teachers' methods received considerable attention when they taught the common course. Ten students held the view that the methods used in the classroom were always interesting, and they were 13.70% of the total.

The next question dealt with the lessons prescribed in the textbook. The question aimed to find out whether the lessons were interesting in the classroom. Eight students, who constituted 10.96% of the total, said that they never found the lesson prescribed in the textbook interesting. While the majority of students (60.27%) held the view that the lessons prescribed in the textbook cultivated an interest on an occasional basis, 13 students opined that they often felt the topic interesting and their percentage accorded to 17.81%. However, 8 students constituted 10.96% of the total population, and they responded that they always found the lessons interesting in the textbook.

The next question touched upon the words used in the textbook. Two students (2.74%) responded that they never found the words used in the textbook difficult to understand. Most of the students agreed that the words used in the textbook were difficult. In fact, almost 55 students agreed to it, and their percentage constituted 75.34%. Ten students said that they often found the words difficult, and their percentage accorded to 13.70. Six students opined that they always found the words used in the lessons difficult and they constituted 8.22 % of the total.

The next question was concerned with the method of teaching in the classroom. Seven students responded that the way the teacher taught English in the classroom did not cultivate interest for them, and they constituted 9.59% of the total population. The majority of the students said that they found the method used to teach English interesting. They were 30 in number and constituted 41.9% of the total population. While 23 students, who constituted 31.51% of the total, believed that they often found the method interesting in the classroom, 13 students responded that in regard to English language teaching, they always found the method interesting in the classroom.

The study raised questions regarding the usefulness of the English language in the future. Three students, who constituted 4.11% of the total, did not find the English taught in the classroom productive, while 17 students agreed that they felt the lessons taught in the classroom were useful on an occasional basis, and their percentage constituted 23.29%. Fifteen students found the lesson taught in the classroom often useful, and they constituted 20.55%. Most of the students said that the lesson was useful. They constituted 38 in number and represented 52.05 % of the total students.

The next question was regarding the participation of students in speaking English in the classroom. Five students said that they never got any chance to speak English in the classroom, and their percentage was 6.85%. Thirty-eight students, who constituted 52.05%, said that they spoke

English in the classroom only on an occasional basis. 15 students said that they often get a chance to speak in the classroom and they constituted 20.55 % of students. On the other hand, 15 students responded that they always got a chance to speak in English in the classroom, and their percentage constituted 20.55%. The next question was about the number of English classes, and most of the students agreed that they had more than three classes in a week. They were 65 in number, and their percentage constituted 89.04%.

The study also investigated whether the number of English classes was sufficient. Most of the participants agreed that more than three classes per week were necessary to learn English. Thirty students supported it, and their percentage constituted 41.10%. However, 8 students responded that the classes were not sufficient in a week and their percentage constituted 10.96%. The study also made inquiries regarding the number of classes students would like to have. Most of the students agreed that they need more than 3 classes in a week to learn the English language. They were 47 in number, and their percentage constituted 64.38%.

The last question in this section was concerned with the number of language skills practiced in the classroom in regard to the course. Most of the students said that all the language skills were practiced in the classroom. They constituted 31 in number, which accorded to 42.47%. Most of the students agreed that more than one language skill was practiced in the classroom. No students marked the first option, which mentioned only one language skill.

## Students Responses on Teaching

An array of questions regarding the teaching of English in the classroom was also put forth by the study. The section offered fifteen different questions. There were four options to mark students' responses. The following table shows the responses collected from students regarding teaching information.

**Table 7.**  
*Students' Responses on Teaching*

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Do you think that learning English is a necessity?	2(2.74)	18(24.66)	6(8.22)	47(64.38)
2	Do your teachers demand you to memorize the answers?	9(12.33)	32(43.84)	18(24.66)	14(19.18)
3	Do they give any practice for your exam?	2(2.74)	32(43.84)	30(41.10)	9(12.33)
4	Do teachers give some assignments?	1(1.37)	7(9.59)	25(34.25)	40(54.79)
5	Do they give only those assignments prescribed by the textbook?	3(4.11)	26(35.62)	12(16.44)	32(43.84)
6	Do you think those assignments are useful for your studies?	6(8.22)	14(19.18)	17(23.29)	36(49.32)
7	Is your teacher friendly or formal?	3(4.11)	25(34.25)	20(27.40)	25(34.25)
8	Does she/he present the subject matter in a simpler way?		37(50.68)	23(31.51)	13(17.81)
9	Does your teacher encourage you to ask questions?	6(8.22)	23(31.51)	21(28.77)	23(31.51)
10	Do you ask questions in the class?	20(27.40)	30(41.10)	18(24.66)	5(6.85)
11	Do you get any training or tips to write from your teachers?	5(6.85)	44(60.27)	19(26.03)	5(6.85)

12	Do you get any suggestions to read literature?	10(13.70)	41(56.16)	8(10.96)	14(19.18)
13	Do you have a language lab?	6(8.22)	67(91.78)		
14	Do your teachers give notes for the exam?	36(49.32)	22(30.14)	7(9.59)	8(10.96)
15	Can you approach your teacher whenever you have queries about your lessons?	12(16.44)	32(43.84)	9(12.33)	20(27.40)

The first question asked in this section regarded the necessity of English in students' day-to-day life. The majority of the students said that they had always felt the need to learn English. In fact, 47 students supported this argument, and they constituted 64.38% of the total. However, 2 students, who constituted 2.4% of the total population, said that they had never felt the necessity to learn English, while 18 students responded that they felt the necessity to learn the language on an occasional basis and their percentage constituted 24.66%. Six students opined that they often felt the necessity to learn English and their percentage came around 8.22%.

The next question was concerned with memorizing answers in class. Nine students disagreed that they were forced to memorize answers, while 22 students said that they had memorized the answers occasionally; their percentage constituted 43.84%. Eighteen students (24.66%) said that they had done it more often, whereas 14 students responded that following the instruction of the teacher, they had always memorized the answers.

The study also made inquiries regarding the practices given to students to prepare for the exam. Two students responded that they had never received any practice, and 32 students (43.84%) said that they got practice in the classroom on an occasional basis. 32 students said that they often received training in the classroom and 9 students responded that they had always gotten practice in the classroom. The next question dealt with the assignments given to the students. Forty students agreed that they had always received the assignments from the teachers and their percentage constituted 54.79%. Only one student said that they had never gotten any assignments in the classroom.

The study investigated whether the students were given any assignments other than what was prescribed in the textbook. In this regard, 32 students said that they had always got only the prescribed assignments from the textbook and their percentage came around 43.84%. Twenty-six students responded that the teachers had occasionally given some assignments other than what was prescribed in the textbook. Questions were also asked regarding the relevance of assignments to the study of the English language. Thirty-six students (49.32%) agreed that they felt that the assignments given to them were always useful. Moreover, 17 students said that they had often felt that the assignments were useful to learn the English language.

The next question was regarding the friendly nature of the teacher toward students. Twenty-five students responded that the teachers were friendly towards the students and their percentage constituted 34.25%. However, 3 students did not find the teachers approachable. Enquiries were also made regarding the manner of teaching English. Whether teachers taught the difficult topics in a simple way by using different methods was an important question. Twenty-three students agreed that teachers had often used simple ways to teach English and their percentage constituted 31.51%. Most of the students (50.68%) responded that they had used the simple way to teach English only occasionally. No students reported that the teachers had never used a simple way to teach English in the classroom.

The next question was concerned with the encouragement that students received to ask questions in the classroom. Twenty-three students (31.51%) said that the teachers encouraged the

students to ask questions in the classroom. However, 6 students responded that they were never motivated by the teachers to ask questions and their percentage constituted 8.22%. A group of 23 students (31.51%) and 21 students (28.77%) had agreed that the teachers encouraged the students to ask questions in the classroom occasionally and more often. The study investigated whether the teachers asked questions in the class on an individual basis. Thirty students said that they asked questions in the classroom occasionally. They constituted 41.10%. Twenty students opined that they never asked questions in the class and their percentage constituted 27.40%. Eighteen students said that they often asked questions in the class. Five students added that they always asked questions in the classroom and their percentage came around 6.85%.

The next question was related to formal training to improve writing skills. Forty-four students (60.27%) responded that they received training in writing skills on an occasional basis. However, 5 students (6.85%) responded that they never got any training in writing skills, while 19 (26.03%) students responded that they often got training in writing skills, and 5 (6.85%) students said that they always received training. The next question was regarding whether teachers encouraged the students to read literature to improve their reading skills. Forty-one students held the view that they received encouragement from teachers to read literature, and their percentage constituted 56.16%. Fourteen students said that they always got encouragement from teachers. However, 10 students responded that they had never got encouragement from teachers to read literature and their percentage constituted 13.70%.

The next question was concerned with the language lab. In this regard, 65 students said that they did not have any language labs in the college. In fact, 91.78 % students agreed with this. The next question dealt with the study notes given by the teachers for the exam. Thirty-six students (49.32%) responded that they never got any notes from teachers for the exam, while 22 students agreed that the teachers had given notes on an occasional basis. The last question in this section was related to the approachable character of the teacher, or whether the students felt comfortable asking questions at any time. Thirty-two students (43.84%) agreed that teachers were approachable only at times, while 12 students responded that they could never approach the teacher. Twenty students observed that they could always approach their teacher and their percentage was 27.40%.

### **Student’s Responses on the Textbook**

This section consists of 10 questions regarding the textbook. Students were asked to mark their responses as ‘Never,’ ‘Sometimes,’ ‘Often,’ or ‘Always.’ The following table shows the responses of the students.

**Table 8.**  
*Students’ Responses about the English Textbook*

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Do you think your academic goals can be attained through the textbook?	19(26.03)	41(56.16)	8(10.96)	5(6.85)
2	Do you think the textbook fulfills your needs?	28(38.36)	31(42.47)	12(16.44)	2(2.74)
3	Is the textbook interesting for studying English?	11(15.07)	40(54.79)	16(21.92)	6(8.22)
4	Does the textbook contribute to the development of language skills?	4(5.48)	29(39.73)	23(31.51)	17(23.29)
5	Are the topics intelligible for the whole class?	13(17.81)	29(39.73)	23(31.51)	8(10.96)
6	Do you find the contents interesting?	3(4.11)	47.(64.38)	15(20.55)	8(10.96)

7	Are you interested in activities prescribed in the textbook? To what degree?	12(16.44)	46(63.01)	14(19.18)	1(1.37)
8	How often are other textbooks used in the classroom other than the course textbook?	26(35.62)	25(34.25)	10(13.70)	12(16.44)
9	Do you think that the existing textbook will contribute to your development?	10(13.70)	29(39.73)	22(30.14)	12(16.44)
10	Do you think that your textbook needs some changes?	7(9.59)	28(38.36)	13(17.81)	25(34.25)

The first question in this set was whether the textbook helped the students to attain their academic goals. The majority of the students said that it helped to fulfill their academic goal once in a while. In fact, 41 students agreed on this, and their percentage constituted 56.16. Nineteen students (26.03%) responded that it never helped them to fulfill their goals, while only 5 students totally agreed that it helped to fulfill their academic goals. The next question was based on the requirements of the students concerning the textbook. Thirty-one students responded that the textbook fulfilled the requirements of the students occasionally and their percentage constituted 42.46. Nevertheless, 28 students said that it never fulfilled their needs. They constituted 38.36%.

The following question was to examine whether the textbook was interesting to students or not. Most of the students (54.79%) said that the textbook was interesting occasionally. Eleven students responded that the textbook was not interesting and their percentage constituted 15.07. Six students held the view that the textbook was always interesting and their percentage accorded to 8.22. The next question was regarding the development of language skills through the textbook. Twenty-nine students (39.73%) opined that the textbook helped in improving the language skills on an occasional basis. Twenty-three students strongly agreed that often it helped to enhance language skills. They constituted 31.51%. Seventeen students (23.29%) agreed that the textbook always helped for the development of language skills.

The next question explored the intelligibility of the topics in the textbook. Twenty-nine students opined that the topics prescribed in the textbook was intelligible for the students and their percentage constituted 39.73. Thirteen students (17.81%) expressed that the topic was never intelligible, while 23 students (31.5%) expressed that the topics were often intelligible for the students. Eight students (10.96%) felt that the topics were always intelligible for the students.

Questions were also framed to examine the interest of the students in regard to the textbook. Forty-seven students (64.38%) observed that they found the textbook interesting only in some instances. Fifteen students answered that the topics were often interesting in the textbook, and they constituted 20.55%. Three students revealed that the textbook content was never interesting for them. They constituted 4.11% of the total percentage. Eight students (10.96%) found the textbook content as always interesting.

The next question dealt with the activities prescribed in the textbook. The majority of the students found the activities in the textbook interesting. They were 46 in number, and their percentage constituted 63.01. Twelve students (16.44%) opined that the activities in the textbook were never interesting. However, 14 students revealed that the content was often interesting and their percentage constituted 19.18. One student (1.37%) expressed that the content was always fascinating. The next question was concerned with the use of secondary sources used in the classroom. Twenty-six students (35.62%) held the view that the teachers never used any secondary textbook in the classroom. Nevertheless, 25 students (34.25%) revealed that teachers used another textbook in the classroom on an occasional basis. Ten students agreed that teachers often used textbooks other than the coursebook.

The next question dealt with students' development of English language proficiency with regard to the current textbook. Twenty-nine students (39.73%) opined that the textbook contributed to the development of English language in some instances. Twenty-two students (30.14%) observed that the textbook often contributed to the development of the students. Ten (13.70%) students opined that the textbook never contributed to the development of the students. Twelve students (16.44%) expressed that the textbook always contributed to the development of the students. The final question examined whether the students required any modification with regard to the existing textbook. Twenty-eight students (38.36%) demanded modifications in the existing textbook. In addition, 25 students (34.25%) totally agreed that textbook required change. However, 7 students (9.59%) did not feel the necessity of a change in the existing textbook.

### **Positive Findings of the Textbook**

1. 52.05% students found the English taught in the classroom useful.
2. 89.04% students answered that they had more than 3 classes a week and would like to attend a greater number of classes.
3. 64.38% students expressed that they would like to have more than 3 English classes in a week.
4. 64.38% students considered learning English to be a necessity.
5. 54.79% students responded that teachers gave assignments in the classroom.

### **Negative Findings of the Textbook**

1. 27.40% students revealed that they did not ask questions in class.
2. 49.32% students said that teachers never gave notes for exams.
3. 26.03% students held the view that their academic goals cannot be attained through the textbook.
4. 38.36% students responded that the prescribed textbook did not fulfill the needs of the students.
5. 35.62% students responded that teachers never used secondary sources in the classroom.

This study is based on a few hypotheses. One of them is that the nature of the syllabus and how it is implemented are instrumental to the development of language skills in students. The study showed that the syllabi used in most of the universities were not updated regularly. Consequently, innovations and trends were not incorporated into this syllabus. It was also observed that the language skills of the students examined were not sufficiently developed. These two observations supported the hypothesis that a proper syllabus and its implementation were vital to the development of language skills. The next hypothesis was that the practice of communication skills was often neglected in the classroom. The study demonstrated that though the syllabus stressed communicative skills, they were rarely put into practice in the classroom. This supports the second hypothesis. The next hypothesis was that the teaching methods that were used in colleges were not helpful to students as teachers were not exposed to modern methods of language teaching.

The study showed that most of the teachers had not undergone any teacher training. As a result, they were unaware of new teaching methods. It was also observed from the responses collected from the students that they were not satisfied with the way the classes were conducted. These two points support the hypothesis that outdated teaching methods used in these institutions are of no help to the students. The last hypothesis was about limited opportunities for students to use English. This study concluded that students were afraid of their teachers in most cases. It was even observed that

teachers taught the English language using Malayalam. Consequently, students preferred to use Malayalam in the classroom. These observations further support the hypothesis that the students have limited opportunities to put English to use.

## Conclusion

The study illuminates our understanding of the positive and negative aspects of the textbook and syllabus prescribed in the college by Calicut University. The hypotheses that were explored in the study were critical. Most of the hypotheses were found to be correct with one exception, that is, that students find the English language complex because of assumptions that English is the most difficult language to learn. The study is an insight for syllabus designers and authorities to improve the quality of language education syllabi, as well as textbooks. The authorities should give more priority to the negative aspects of these current resources so that they may come up with a better version of syllabi and textbooks. The study advocates for the learner-centered approach in English language learning. This approach will help the students gain a better command of the language in the class.

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## Shadow ESL Education from North American Tutors' Perspective: Are We Real Teachers?

Emily L. Kerr

### Abstract

For-profit, private tutoring services, often referred to as *shadow education*, are tutoring students for pay and are made use of as a concurrent supplement to their standard academic courses or programs. These tutoring sessions are often online and given by tutors who work for companies that are for-profit businesses in the education services industry. Tutors are often subject matter “experts” working as independent contractors, many of whom have little or no formal training as teachers. This is a qualitative case pilot study consisting of semistructured interviews with two such tutors working at a company that offers online tutoring in content areas and ESL to Chinese international undergraduate students studying abroad in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. Data reveal that these tutors have concerns with their sense of professional identity as teachers. These results elicit questions of who has the privilege of being called a “teacher” and the status of online for-profit tutors as compared to classroom teachers. Findings also include that tutors’ perceptions of working for a for-profit shadow education company impacts their teaching practices.

**Keywords:** shadow education, ESL, online tutoring, for-profit tutoring, supplemental tutoring, tutor perspectives, teacher professional identity

### Introduction

Because academics at the undergraduate university level are quite different from those at high school, many undergraduate students, especially at the freshman and sophomore levels, require additional assistance with their courses in the form of tutoring in order to achieve the grades they desire. The field of shadow education and private supplementary tutoring has been continuously and rapidly growing worldwide throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bray, 2013). However, definitions of *shadow education* and what it includes have been inconsistent throughout research (Bray & Kobakhidze, 2014).

Today's technology offers university students and their parents the ability to procure additional online supplementary tutoring from for-profit tutoring businesses in the education services industry. Businesses and organizations providing these services include those that target international students because they frequently require both academic and linguistic support when preparing to start college in an English as a Second Language (ESL) setting. Adapting to changes from high school to higher education is significant enough, but when it happens in a second language and culture, it can be even more challenging for students. These students may have greater difficulty following lectures, understanding readings and assignments, and writing coherently than their native-speaking peers. Thus, for-profit private tutoring companies offer help for these students so they can better understand course content and academic expectations.

Due to the advent of the internet and its networking capabilities, it is easier for students and tutors to connect, and therefore much of today's shadow education is in an online setting, a one-to-one teaching context, or both, as opposed to a classroom full of students. As such, the tutors who work in shadow education tend to be subject matter "experts" based on their education and work experience, but many have not had formal pedagogical training in teaching or any formal teaching experience. Because of this and the context in which they teach, tutors in this type of educational setting do not meet the traditional definition of a teacher (Aurini, 2004). Therefore, tutors working in the for-profit shadow education industry may question their own professional identities as educators. This is of concern because a weak professional identity can lead to tutors' deprofessionalization (Xiong et al., 2020), including (a) whether or not they get to claim the title of *teacher*; (b) whether their professional status is equal to that of a more traditional classroom teacher; and (c) whether the for-profit organization's focus on profit affects their teaching practices. As both a researcher and a tutor in the for-profit shadow education industry myself, an insider in the context, I have experienced difficulty seeking employment in more traditional settings. Despite having the required educational background and many years of teaching experience, my experience is often not considered as being adequate because it has not been in a traditional setting, which has led to me questioning my own professional identity as a teacher and an educator.

Current literature shows that the professional identities of tutors are largely affected by both discourse and context in terms of how they are viewed and what they do. As Cross (2006) argues, the understanding and awareness of the "contexts within which [educators] are positioned ... plays perhaps the most significant role in constructing what they then 'do' in that role" (p. 7). In other words, the teaching context informs a tutor's identity-in-practice. A study by Xiong et al. (2020) finds that private EFL tutors "have constructed a range of hybrid identities" (p. 1) based on the contexts in which they teach. Likewise, researchers Yung and Yuan (2020) claim "the[ir] study sheds light on how implicit values and beliefs about for-profit shadow education are created and manifested in educational and social discourses" (p. 153), particularly due to the commercial genre of tutors' biographies used for promotional purposes. Additionally, Trent's (2016) study of private tutors in Hong Kong reveals that existing discourses rigidly divide tutors and mainstream educators, which "constrain[s] the capacity of the former to construct their preferred professional identities" (p. 115). Likewise, Xiao's (2016) study of 155 tutors from Chinese open universities discovered the inferiority that tutors felt as compared to their conventional counterparts, reflecting the division Trent (2016) describes. Thus having "less power to shape the environment in which they work" and being "more constrained by contextual factors" (Stickler & Emke, 2015, p. 31), tutors can experience difficulty seeing themselves as educational professionals. The current pilot study expands on this idea as participating tutors describe how their experiences shadow tutoring online in the ESL content area context inform their own professional identities as educators.

## Theoretical Framework

Professional identity is defined as “one’s professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences” (Slay & Smith, 2011, p. 85). Additionally, based on Bandura’s (1977/1986) social learning theory that social ideas mediate processes and behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) define a teacher’s self-efficacy as “the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p. 233). This definition goes hand in hand with that of professional identity based on the self-concept that Slay and Smith (2011) give. In other words, if online shadow education tutors learn to teach based on their specific teaching context and believe they have the necessary attributes and experience to give them the capacity to be successful in the teaching tasks required of them, they can develop professional identities as teachers. However, because educators in online shadow education often do not have specific training in teaching and often lack experience in a traditional classroom (Aurini, 2004), they do not have the same experiences as a person who fits the more traditional definition of *teacher* and thus may believe the identity of *teacher* is beyond them.

## Methodology

### Study Design

The methodological approach of this pilot study is a categorical and thematic analysis of interview data based on theoretical frameworks of identity including Gee’s (1989/2002) concept of identity as Discourse (capital D), “distinctive ways of ‘being and doing’ that allow people to enact and/or recognize a specific and distinctive socially-situated identity” (2002, p. 160) and Fairclough’s (2003) concept of identity, seeing discourse “as part of social practice—ways of ways of acting, ways of representing, ways of being” (p. 27). As such, through their discourse during interviews, the participants reveal that their *being* and *doing* in their work is a means to socially situate or represent how they view their professional identities.

Data collection for this study included interviews with two tutors working at one such shadow education company based in Toronto, Ontario, and Beijing, China and offering supplementary online ESL and content area tutoring services to Chinese undergraduate students who are studying abroad in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. The company connects students with tutors who are positioned as being “experts” in their fields based on their educational background, as the company requires tutors to have earned at least a master’s degree in their field. Online tutoring takes place both synchronously in one-on-one online live tutorials in video chat sessions and asynchronously via the online platform where students can submit their essays and questions about their assignments in their university courses or about English language learning. Some of these tutors have had pedagogical training, such as retired teachers or professors or those who work in tutoring in order to supplement their primary teaching incomes. Although many of the company’s tutors are current or former graduate students who have had experience as a teaching assistant (TA) at a university, many have not had any formal pedagogical training, including in ESL teaching and teaching content in the ESL setting. Therefore, they lack the pedagogical knowledge that comes from this training, which could help them further develop their teaching skills and classroom practices.

Finally, it is important to note in terms of positionality that I, as the researcher, also work as a tutor for the same company as the participants. While this position provides an emic view of my participants’ experiences and perceptions, there is room for possible bias in the interpretation of data. However, in order to address the issue of bias, my data collection focused on reflexivity. I also

developed an audit trail and maintained a reflexive research journal accounting for my actions and decisions as a means to work through my positionality. As such, taking a reflexive position assisted in my interpretation and presentation of the data because I understand firsthand where the participating tutors are coming from.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and impressions of two tutors in this online shadow education setting regarding how they see and have developed their professional identities and what has influenced their development. Data for this study is derived from semistructured interviews (see Appendix) conducted with the two participating tutors and addresses the following research questions: How do participating tutors at this company define or describe their professional identities? How have they formed their professional identities as educators? How, if at all, has teaching online in the shadow education context influenced the formation of their professional identities? How, if at all, has the context of online shadow education affected their teaching practices?

### **Participants**

The participating tutors will be given the pseudonyms “Tony” and “Clint.” These tutors teach both ESL and content areas, and they were chosen for this study specifically because they are among the company’s most active tutors. Both participants have been with the company longer than the majority of tutors, both have high ratings from both management and students, and this job is their primary source of income. Out of mutual respect as colleagues at the same tutoring company, they agreed to participate in the study. Tony is an American of Chinese heritage from California who worked as a TA as a graduate student. At the company, he tutors English Literature, ESL, and Academic Essay Writing. Similarly, Clint is a Canadian from Ontario who also worked as a TA as a graduate student. He tutors Sociology, Criminology, ESL, and Academic Essay Writing. Neither tutor has had any formal pedagogical training in ESL teaching, Tony had limited pedagogical training as a TA, and Clint has not had any pedagogical training at all.

### **Data Analysis**

Data for this study included interview data from both of the participants. To transcribe the interview data, I used the online transcription service *Transcribe*, which provides not only verbatim transcriptions, but also provides the option to distinguish among speakers and includes time stamps within the transcription. Transcribe (2020) claims “90% accuracy for well-recorded, clear audio in select languages” ([transcribe.wreally.com](https://www.transcribe.wreally.com)), including English, for its automatic transcription service. Upon the completion of transcription, I reviewed the transcripts provided by the app and was easily able to identify any discrepancies or errors made by the application and thus made all of the necessary corrections.

To code the interview data, I used a thematic analysis to constructively develop themes from the patterns that emerged in the participants’ discussions. I chose codes based on answering the research questions listed above and developed themes that reflected Slay and Smith’s (2011) definition of professional identity and that of teacher efficacy by Tschannen-Moran, et al. (1998). The findings the data yielded were then divided into two primary categories consisting of tutors’ identity constructions and the substantiating factors informing those constructions. Then I used an adapted version of Saldaña’s (2009) streamlined model of codes-to-theory for qualitative inquiry to code and categorize the most substantiating factors that influenced the construction of these tutors’ professional identities. Finally, I viewed the data reflexively and memoed it with my own thoughts as

both a researcher and as an active tutor for the company, thus analyzing it with an insider's perspective through a lens based on my own experiences working for the company and based on the formation of my own professional identity.

## Findings

### Identity Constructions

**Tony.** Tony considers himself as being, in the general sense, one who teaches, but not in the traditional sense of being a *teacher*, meaning that he believes his work does not allow him to fulfill the traditional criteria or personification of what one would associate with the meaning of the word *teacher*.

“I don't consider myself a teacher like a normal teacher. I've never taught in a public school ... to call yourself a true teacher you have to have a few years teaching public school ... I still don't consider myself an ESL teacher; I just pretend to be one.”

It is clear that the traditional idea of who a teacher is has impacted his own professional identity and that Tony believes in order to meet those criteria, one must have had experience teaching in a public school. Hence, in using the phrase “normal teacher,” Tony clearly sees himself not only as not allowed to claim the title or identity of the *teacher* but as something lesser or even abnormal with respect to being an educator. Therefore, Tony may feel marginalized in terms of the education industry or as being a part of the community of practice that is teaching. Additionally, the use of the word “pretend” makes it seem as if he sees himself as just playing at being a teacher, as if it were make-believe.

**Clint.** When Clint describes his professional identity as an educator, he seems to reject the idea that he should be considered a teacher because what he does is not something that fits with the general concept of the *teacher*. He says:

“I almost kind of don't look at myself as a teacher, and maybe that's because of my experience in education where I never necessarily had good relationships with teachers. People would tell me, ‘hey, you'd make a good teacher,’ and I'm like, ‘there's no way I'm becoming a teacher,’ that sort of thing. I guess I view myself more as a consultant.”

Clint's professional identity as a consultant rather than as a teacher seems to be preventing him from seeing himself as part of the community of practice that is teaching, as if he rejects that title and the identity of the *teacher*. His past educational experience relating to his own teachers seems to have negatively affected his ability to see himself in what he perceives to be the role of the *teacher*.

### Substantiating Factors

Findings from the data revealed three specific substantiating factors that participating tutors indicated as playing a part in how they have formed their professional identities. These factors include (a) the types of expectations tutors feel that both management and their students have of them based on how the students have been sold the services the company provides; (b) the idea that these expectations blur the line between academic pedagogy and customer service; and finally, (c) the fact these tutors are paid on a “pay-per-pop” basis. This last factor means that these shadow education tutors as independent contractors for the company are paid per live tutorial taught, per essay edited and revised, and per question answered rather than based on a regular salary. These factors are specifically related to teaching in the context that these tutors work in, and although adjunct instructors in colleges may be paid per course taught or per student and substitute K-12 teachers may be paid per diem, these circumstances in the more traditional teaching context do not necessarily come with the same implications as they do for shadow education tutors. Additionally, because the online context affects their classroom and teaching practices, it should be noted as a tacit or secondary factor that

plays a part in forming the professional identities of these tutors. Viewing these substantiating factors through the lens of the research questions, it is clear that they do not fall in line with the traditional concept of *teacher* and are not generally factors that affect everyone who identifies as a *teacher*. This then begs the question of who can be included in the description of the *teacher*.

**Expectations of management and students.** Expectations of tutors held by management and clients—i.e., students—may not always be realistic in terms of what tutors can accomplish in a one-hour live tutorial. These tutors expressed their concerns about such unrealistic expectations specifically regarding live tutorials for essays, indicating pressure from feeling that management and students expect measurable progress on writing an essay in a one-hour tutorial.

I feel real pressure not to fuck up ... If a student complains that we just got through the introduction, management would be like ‘hey, what’s going on here?’ ... Sometimes you feel compelled to kind of like overextend yourself because you need to walk away feeling like the students got, got something on paper. I’m not going to be able to teach them all the nuances of grammar and syntax, how to structure an essay, how to do research and find appropriate evidence, and master a citation guide in one hour.  
—Clint

This pressure continues not only when tutoring academic essay writing, but also when tutoring other subjects as well, and tutors feel this based on what the students have been sold, not just from the beginning, but during the semester.

The company provides students with an advisor, referred to as a Student Development Coordinator (SDC), who helps the student determine where they need help and when they should sign up for a live tutorial session or submit an essay for editing and review or a question; as such, this SDC continues to sell the company’s services.

[The SDC’s] job is to act as ongoing salesman, to kind of continue to check up on students, you know, ostensibly to see how they’re doing, but really to say, “Okay, well, here, where are your needs? Let me find a class that I can sell you to fill them.” ... That’s their job, and so they’re salesmen. —Tony

In this sense, tutors are concerned that the SDC is not able to truly gauge what the tutor can do in the given time frame of a live tutorial, and only encourages students to spend money.

Understanding what we are unable to teach and what the student can or can’t learn in the given time and context goes against the promise made to the students as customers. So, in terms of what you’re considering, it’s not solely the merit of the work, but other factors creep into it, including, you know, marketing and sales, and making sure that you’re not ruining someone’s business model. —Tony

In other words, it is clear Tony feels that he is under pressure to fulfill promises made to his students based on what they were sold, for example, when the tutor receives information that the student wants to cover the first fourteen chapters of the textbook in preparation for an upcoming exam. Tutors feel the pressure that students were promised this could be done, when in reality it cannot. Additionally, this shows how the pressure to fulfill promises to students reduces a tutor’s feeling of self-efficacy and thus their ability to see themselves as a *teacher*.

**The ambiguous *line* between pedagogy and customer service.** The for-profit shadow education setting can make it difficult for tutors who may prefer to focus on academic integrity to see this *line* because they also answer to management in terms of a focus on profitability. The company may stress academic integrity as well; however, the factor of profit has an impact on the tutors’ teaching in terms of what they are and are not able to do in the classroom. The crux of the situation can be seen in terms of asking where that *line* between customer service or sales and pedagogy or academia is drawn. Unfortunately, the definitions of customer service and academic integrity are very ambiguous in the shadow education industry due to profit being the bottom line, which affects tutors’

pedagogical practices in their classrooms, and in turn, affects their own professional identities as educators. This is mostly due to not knowing where to draw the line with students. Tutors know they cannot just give students answers or rewrite or even add their own words to a student's essay. However, since students are customers, they expect results in terms of their grades for the money they pay for tutoring services, and management expects them to be satisfied customers.

I have a really hard time kind of knowing where to draw the line with academic integrity and I know other tutors have expressed the same ... We need to make this worth it for them. You know ... for shelling out all this money, we can't have kids going home and showing [their parents] Ds and Fs on their report cards. —Clint

Clint feels the ambiguity of where this line is drawn and relates it to grade inflation in high schools or universities due to athletics, so talented athletes can continue to play in order to draw money into the university.

I think there's so much palliation ... I was approached by the person overseeing the classes and they said, "Hey, you gotta, you gotta give them a little bit more of a bone here." —Clint

This, of course, raises questions for tutors regarding the line between pedagogy and customer service, because it is not clear as to where that *line* is, how much of a "bone" is appropriate to throw to students while adhering to academic integrity, and when and how this should be done. Again, this illustrates how this ambiguity between academics and customer service affects these tutors' teaching practices.

What we do is not quite completely a hundred percent pedagogical ... part of what we're doing is we're selling it to them that they're learning something, and I think with that kind of mercantile aspect in mind. —Tony

Both tutors and the company want to stay within the realm of academic integrity, but it seems that the tutors are reluctant to draw such a firm line based on the need for customer service and satisfaction. This ambiguity between customer service and academic integrity affects their self-efficacy as teachers and therefore can cause them to question their own professional identities as educators.

**“Pay-per-pop” teaching.** The way tutors are compensated for their work also factors in as a means to affect what they can and should do in the classroom. Tutors are paid based on how much work they can get, meaning they have a vested interest in selling their services.

Because you're not paying people by the salary, you're paying people per lesson, and so, with the goal therefore is just, if the more lessons you can give the more you can elongate your, your lessons, right? And so, it's like if you're doing like pay-per-pop sort of, that model, then, then that changes the nature of teaching where you're no longer concerned with teaching, you're concerned with making money. — Tony

Because tutors are paid per lesson rather than by salary, the fact that the more lessons they give, the more pay they will receive also has an effect on their teaching and on their professional identities as *teachers*, because professionals who are thought of as *teachers* do not experience this in their teaching context.

I may withhold information so that I could sell it to them later. I phrase it so that like next time it's what we didn't have time to cover in class today ... and so, so, like I think that changes the relationship a little bit ... our, our end goal is as much profit as it is ensuring that students learn something. —Tony

Thus, the forced sense of having to also be a salesperson and market their offerings to students in order to be successful as described by these tutors is something that not only affects teaching, but also their professional identities as *teachers*.

**The online teaching context.** Participating tutors did not discuss this idea as it directly relates to their professional identities. However, because the participating tutors discussed how the other substantiating factors of the for-profit shadow education context mentioned above affect their teaching practices and therefore their self-efficacy, it is clear that because the context of the online setting also affects their teaching practices, it too will have an effect on their self-efficacy and therefore professional identities as teachers. Although both tutors discussed their appreciation of the technological advantages of online teaching, such as the speed that technology offers in terms of using the web, file sharing, and finding images, participating tutors identified prominent issues based on the one-on-one teaching context and how the online context affects student–teacher interaction and relationships.

“In a one-on-one situation online, you’re dependent on the one student to bounce ideas around. If they don’t respond, you’ve got nothing, but in a traditional classroom everyone else can see what’s going on and share ideas. —Tony

Clint, on the other hand, appreciates the personalized setting where he can work with students in a more comfortable setting where he can address their individual needs without students having to worry about what their classmates might think of them; he values the privacy the one-on-one online context offers the learning transaction in live tutorial sessions.

Having one person means [students] are more open to sharing. In a private setting when the student and teacher are in the comfort of their own homes or dorms allows them to be more vulnerable. —Clint

Tony, however, points out some of the difficulties this situation offers in terms of interacting with the students via technology during live tutorial sessions and explains how this changes how he interacts with students in the virtual classroom.

Sometimes the student doesn’t turn on their cameras, and it’s hard to make eye contact and it’s hard to use body language, and I can’t walk around, and these things are unavailable to me. —Tony

He feels that although technology gives him certain advantages, there is something lost in the way he can interact with his students. On the contrary, Clint sees the distance that asynchronous online teaching provides as an additional positive factor:

[Online asynchronous teaching] removes a bit of some acrimony from the student–teacher relationship in general ... it allows me to step away from my students and come back later. —Clint

He seems to prefer the barrier that the asynchronous online context provides him so he can have the ability to hide any frustration with students that he might feel.

## Discussion

The lack of a professional identity as a *teacher* that the participants discussed is related to aspects of the online for-profit shadow education teaching context such as the expectations of management and students, the ambiguous line between pedagogy and customer service, and the “pay-per-pop” manner in which teachers earn their income. Having the professional identity of the *teacher* must include the “attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences” (Slay & Smith, 2011, p. 85) that go along with the concept of the *teacher*. However, because the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences of these tutors do not match those they associate with being a *teacher*, they do not feel they can claim such a professional identity. Identity dissonance such as this prevents a person from adopting a specific professional identity (Warin, et al., 2006). On the contrary, the beliefs, motives, and experiences these tutors have that come from the for-profit shadow education context do not allow them to completely

adopt the professional identity of the *teacher*, nor do they allow them to believe they have the self-efficacy “to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task” (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 233). Thus, the participating tutors see themselves as consultants or as *pretending* to be a teacher rather than actual *being* a teacher.

Another aspect of the shadow education industry that Aurini (2004) notes is an overall lack of formal training in pedagogy and a lack of formal teaching experience among shadow education tutors as they tend to be subject matter experts rather than trained teachers. As the participating tutors indicate, this lack of formal pedagogical training, especially when it comes to the ESL setting, further negatively impacts their self-efficacy and their professional identities in terms of being a *teacher*. Aurini (2004) states that shadow education companies see teachers as “lack[ing] ‘entrepreneurial’ or ‘commercial’ ambition” (p. 481), which such companies balance by employing a more business-oriented management team. The participating tutors indicated that they have experienced such ambition in their shadow education company’s attitude, as their work seems to involve sales and marketing to some extent, which is not only a source of revenue for the company but also a source of income for the tutors. Educators who are considered traditional *teachers* are not expected to have entrepreneurial or commercial ambition, as Aurini (2004) notes, and such beliefs, experiences, motives, and values (Slay & Smith, 2011) are not attributes of their work. However, because this difference is not a part of a *teacher’s* professional identity, but it is that of participating tutors, therefore these tutors feel that they cannot adopt the professional identity of the *teacher* as their own due to the dissonance in identity (Warin, et al., 2006).

Additionally, due to the for-profit nature of the shadow education sector, the bottom line as a factor is not part of the traditional educational setting, nor would it affect traditional teachers and classroom pedagogy. Consequently, its effect on teaching practices in shadow education is based on the additional factor of both sales and marketing, as well as customer service. Aurini (2004) refers to this as a “marriage between markets and education” (p. 487), and just as the participating tutors indicated, there is a problem when the expectations of tutors that are held by management, students, and parents as customers may not always be realistic or pedagogical in terms of what tutors are able to accomplish. Participating tutors indicated that this sales-driven context and the ambiguous *line* between customer service and pedagogy has not only affected their teaching practice, but it has also negatively impacted their self-efficacy in terms of teaching, thereby hindering their abilities to form the professional identity of the *teacher*. As this *line* is not something traditional teachers are concerned with, this difference in beliefs and values (Slay & Smith, 2011) thus will have an effect on these tutors’ professional identities as compared to educators who would be considered traditional *teachers*.

Finally, the online teaching context for these tutors affects their teaching practices in terms of a change from the traditional community of inquiry (COI) that a *teacher* leads. In the online one-on-one teaching setting, forms of *presence*, i.e., teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence (see Garrison, et al., 2001) have changed based on the differences in the online one-on-one COI. Teaching presence includes “organization, design, discourse facilitation, and direct instruction,” and social presence includes “discourse that promotes positive affect, interaction, and cohesion” (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010, p. 1722), which together create a cognitive presence (Garrison, et al., 2001), which can be seen as evidence of learning (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). In the case of the participating tutors, they discussed how these differences in COI affect their teaching practices in terms of the one-on-one setting and how they interact with their students. As their setting dictates that their teaching practices differ from those of a traditional *teacher*, this may make them question that label as a professional identity, as these differences in attributes determine their actions and experiences that construct that identity (Slay & Smith, 2011).

## Implications and Recommendations

The professional identity of teachers is “a profoundly individual and psychological matter because it concerns the self-image and other-image of particular teachers” (Varghese, et al., 2005, p. 39), and the development of professional identities plays a critical role in teacher education, training, and their professional development (Warin, et al., 2006), and specifically in a second language teaching or ESL setting (see Varghese, et al., 2005; Yazan & Percy, 2016). Moreover, the development of their professional identity as a teacher is a conjunctive focal point of teachers’ growth as educators (Johnston, et al., 2005). Thus, in order for tutors to continue to develop their teaching skills in the context of the online ESL shadow education setting, it is important that they first have the opportunity to develop their professional identities as that of *teachers*, as data indicate that they see the “attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences” (Slay & Smith, 2011, p. 85) of their work as being different from those of a *teacher*. As the participating tutors expressed, they do not yet have the ability to see themselves in the role of *teacher*.

Slay and Smith (2011) argue that stigma can impact professional identity similarly to how experiences of personal transformation can alter one’s professional identity. Therefore, as a way to help these tutors construct their identities as *teachers*, professional development (PD) is recommended as a way for these tutors to focus on building their professional identities. This PD would be used as a way to allow personal transformation based on changing the tutors’ frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997) as to what is meant by the concept of *teacher* in order for them to enhance their self-efficacy. For example, Clint rejected the identity of the *teacher* based on negative experiences from his past due to what is known as an *apprenticeship of observation*. This is a phenomenon that occurs because novice teachers or those who teach without having had formal pedagogical training have “spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action” (Borg, 2004, p. 274). Moreover, as Yazan and Percy (2016) explain, emotions have an impact on the development of teachers’ professional identities, and these negative emotions related to his educational experience have affected Clint in terms of his own professional identity development. Therefore, this type of PD could help Clint cultivate his professional identity as being that of a *teacher* by reconciling his dissonance (Warin, et al., 2006) in values, beliefs, and motives with those attributes he perceives as belonging to a teacher and eventually become able to see himself in that role.

Finally, as PD can only help bridge the gap between the tutors’ beliefs and experiences working for the company, there are ways the company could also make changes in order to promote their tutors’ professional identities and self-efficacy in terms of being *teachers*. Many of the issues the participating tutors mentioned have to do with company policies, such as being independent contractors versus employees, how the compensation as “pay-per-pop” teaching makes tutors feel expendable, and how they feel out of touch with the company in terms of being part of an educational community of practice. Additionally, improved understanding as to clarity of the company’s expectations of tutors, the line between pedagogy and customer service as it relates to academic integrity, and finally reconsidering how students and their parents are being sold the company’s services could also positively impact the professional identities and self-efficacy of the company’s tutors because it would help tutors better understand their role as it relates to the company as a whole.

## Opportunities for Future Research

Research into the online for-profit shadow education and tutoring industry is still lacking in terms of the tutors. Researchers can find a wide range of opportunities for further research as this industry continues to grow, and the case study discussed here opens the door for this additional research. This is becoming increasingly necessary in today’s COVID-affected world as education and supplementary

tutoring have rapidly moved to online platforms. For example, similar studies regarding the professional identities of tutors in shadow education marketed towards other types of students could reveal more about this topic. Moreover, additional research that further delves into the site studied in this case will add to the perspectives discussed here, such as perspectives of management, other tutors, and even students. Additionally, research into a framework for the development of professional identities of shadow education tutors could help determine ways to mitigate substantiating risk factors for deprofessionalization. Finally, research into the idea of what a *teacher* is and whether there are criteria for legitimately claiming this title or identity could give insight and legitimacy to the different types of educators out there, including determining requirements for pedagogical training for tutors, and even for university professors who have had none.

## Conclusion

Due to the differences in their work with students, tutors in online for-profit shadow education settings may question their own professional identities as educators in comparison to that of a traditional classroom teacher, specifically regarding whether or not they are entitled to the identity and status of *teacher* and what that identity encompasses. In order to explore the perceptions and impressions of shadow education tutors as educators regarding their professional identities and how they have developed, this qualitative case study of two shadow education tutors based on the theoretical frameworks of professional identity and teacher self-efficacy answered these research questions: How do these tutors define or describe their professional identities? How have these participating tutors formed their professional identities as educators? How has the context of online shadow education affected their teaching? The participating tutors work for the same Canadian-based company that offers ESL and content area tutoring to Chinese students studying abroad in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. Data collected from semistructured interviews with these tutors revealed that instead of identifying as *teachers*, the tutors identified as consultants or “pretended” to play the role of a teacher instead of being what they think of as a “real” teacher.

The most significant factors affecting the formation of these tutors’ professional identities are related to the for-profit organization’s focus on its bottom line, i.e., company profit in terms of (a) expectations that both management and students have of tutors; (b) the way in which students are sold the company’s services; (c) how such expectations blur the line between pedagogy and customer service; (d) being compensated on a “pay-per-pop” basis, and finally (e) the tacit effects of the differences in their community of inquiry in the online one-on-one setting. These factors affect tutors’ teaching practices based on different experiences, attributes, values, beliefs, and motives than those that are often associated with the professional identity of the *teacher*. These differences contribute to the dissonance between the professional identities of these tutors and their impressions of what constitutes a professional identity as a *teacher*.

Because there is so little research into the educators who work in the for-profit shadow education industry, more knowledge about who they are and how they identify will benefit this rapidly growing industry. Hence, this study paves the way for additional research into both this site and others that serve different types of students. Uncovering the factors of the for-profit shadow education industry that seem to give these educators the motivation to doubt their credentials and professional identities as *teachers* or educators could lead to professional development for such tutors, thereby helping them create a more solid construction of their professional identities. It could perhaps even prevent them from feeling marginalized in terms of how they see themselves in their careers. This is important, as such marginalization may influence how they are seen by the education industry as a whole, which could then negatively affect their careers and professional growth. Therefore, additional

research may assist the education industry in reconstructing the concept of what it means to be a *teacher* in order to expand this notion to be more inclusive in terms of the online shadow education context.

### Disclosure Statement

There are no potential conflicts of interest in this research.

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## Appendix

### Interview Guide

(Probing questions were asked if necessary.)

#### 1. *Background.*

Why did you start teaching, and why ESL and content courses to ESL students?

What is your native language and what other languages are you fluent in?

#### 2. *Teacher knowledge and professional development.*

What types of teacher education and training have you had?

What forms of professional development have you found most useful?

To what extent did your previous training prepare you for your current job?

What have you learned since, either formally or informally?

What kind of training do you wish you had had?

What are your goals for learning and for professional development for the future?

What do you feel you still need to learn or what do you think would help improve your teaching?

#### 3. *Online teaching context.*

What types of teaching contexts have you had experience in?

What do you have to say about these contexts?

How has teaching online impacted your work and your knowledge of teaching?

How is online teaching different from face-to-face teaching for you?

#### 4. *Identity.*

How do you see yourself as a teacher?

How do you see yourself as a professional?

How does your (in)ability to speak your students' L1 impact your professional identity?

How does teaching online impact your professional identity?

How does your ability to use scaffolding in your classes impact your professional identity?



## Book Reviews

Ricento, T. (2021). *Refugees in Canada: On the Loss of Social and Cultural Capital* (2021, 157 pp.), Palgrave Macmillan. \$24.99 (US) (Paperback), ISBN: 978-3030764524

Humans are on the move. As refugees are forced and flow over borders due to war, violence, upheaval, and opportunity, the value of their language and professional experience is constantly questioned and often dismissed. Past and present research holds that learning a new home country's language is the critical component in refugee adjustment, success, and connection (Chiswick & Miller, 1995; Kosyakova et al., 2022). Much attention is focused on providing basic language training to refugees as a path to self-sufficiency, but there is little focus on language training for specific professions of expertise to help refugees retain and contribute to highly skilled professions. With *Refugees in Canada: On the Loss of Social and Cultural Capital*, Ricento fills a void by examining the need to recognize the capital that refugees bring and the pressing demand to refocus the language curriculum to better support and promote professional transitions.

### Summary

Canada is often epitomized as a multicultural mecca, a blended country that celebrates diversity and welcomes newcomers seeking a home within its borders. Through a rich case study methodology layering personal narratives with labor market data, Ricento provides a much-needed alternative picture of the refugee experience in Calgary, Canada. This reality is one of assimilation, isolation, devaluing, and deskilling from previous professional positions in home countries. In a longitudinal study entitled *The Linguistic and Capital Barriers to Refugees Access to Medical and Social Services*, the author exposes how specific gaps in English language curriculum intertwined with credentialing policies that favor western-trained professionals create a severe loss of capital for refugees and an overall economic loss for Canada. Through applying a dense collection of literature, Canadian immigration policy, and employment and education data to firsthand refugee experiences, the method, ideology, and design of English language curriculum for refugees emerges as a key focus.

In the first chapter, "The Problem," Ricento dissects the disconnect between Canada's welcoming image and the reality and background of policies of indigenous othering and immigrant exclusion that contribute to unemployment and a decrease of social and professional capital. Highlighting the results from a longitudinal study on foreign medical credentials using a point system in Canada and the interwoven hegemonic value of Western English, the author richly paints Canadian immigration policy history, bringing to life the harsh environment for refugees that motivated the main study.

Ricento also deftly argues that the intersection of specific hurdles faced by refugees with these policies deserves a specific focus from ELL teachers to lawmakers because of the unique situations that these immigrants encounter. The author sets the stage for these issues by examining the struggle between the Canadian government's desire to attract highly skilled, linguistically compatible immigrants and the reality of the transitional experience. The study discusses two main factors: lack of recognition of foreign, nonwestern professional credentials and deficiency in English language training for specific professions.

In chapter two, "The Researcher and the Researched," Ricento points to key scholarship that encapsulates humanistic values and a demand for social change, providing a guiding social compass for the study and the book. The chapter explores the pivotal works of Marx, Hymes, and Labov to bring awareness of the hegemonic structures that may inadvertently influence research and the responsibility of the researcher to work for change for the participants. Historical scholarship centered on economic capital, unequal linguistic power relations, and the strength of language ideology provides a theoretical backdrop for comprehending the current state of the loss of capital by refugees in Calgary. These pieces build nicely into the examination of Lightman and Good Gingrich's social exclusion (2012), serving as a theoretical umbrella to demonstrate the loss of capital of the refugees through the exclusion of economic power by limiting access to the entire capital of English.

In chapter three, "The Study," Ricento provides the history, rationale, motivations, methods, and participant profiles for the study featured in the book. The author details previous research within Calgary focusing on refugee experiences with English language learning curriculum and content, analyzing the illuminating data that surfaced from refugee questionnaires demonstrating that highly educated professionals were overwhelmingly underemployed in lower-skilled jobs outside their fields or not employed. Projected possible factors of language, policies, and lack of curriculum focusing on language for professional fields were identified for future study. Ricento outlines the recruitment, selection, and interview process of refugee families for the study and individuals who work within the refugee community. The chapter highlights the gap in research for refugees in Calgary. It also breaks down the essential need to understand their specific obstacles instead of other classes of immigrants due to the often traumatic nature of preceding events before they arrived in Calgary.

The first three chapters provide a rich theoretical and data-based landscape complete with frameworks of capital, Canadian immigration history, and carefully selected methodology aligned with and informed by previous and current refugee experiences. In chapters four and five, Ricento gives voice to the refugees themselves and delves into an analysis of two longitudinal case studies with refugee families. The author provides two contrasting cases of refugee transitions to Calgary with many common threads of loss of capital between them. Careful thematic analysis is applied to interview data to describe and highlight the inability to retain capital and identity, and the impediments specifically around language learning and use in Calgary.

In chapter four, "The Martinez Family," the author shares the first longitudinal case study of a refugee family living in Calgary, Canada. This chapter focuses on losing professional status in licensing fields, specifically medicine and accounting, and the role of language in deterring one from establishing capital as a refugee in Canada. Ricento provides a careful analysis of the narrative that reveals themes of lack of opportunity for language training around specific professions, loss of identity, and the underlying system of economic oppression around nonwestern-trained refugees in professional fields. The findings reveal that language is identified as the main factor for mobility, and lack of opportunity to learn English for specific professional settings displaying an underlying system of economic oppression favoring western-trained professionals. Through a detailed description of the family's journey, the author provides insight into how environments for loss of professional capital

are created. Through unpacking a narrative provided by in-depth interviews, the author pinpoints these areas of loss and their origins in the Canadian system, specifically in a highly specialized field such as medicine. Ricento also selects extremely compelling excerpts from the interviews outlining gaps in English language courses offered for refugees and specific needs for gaining professional linguistic capital. This provides a sense of urgency to advocate for focused English language courses around professions, rather than general day-to-day topics.

The fifth chapter, “Patrick, and Chantel,” details the second case study, which contrasts the first study in refugee status, language, and country. Yet Ricento succinctly demonstrates similar long-term life results. Both case studies, despite their differences, demonstrate similar loss of professional status and linguistic blockades in their stories. This chapter does reveal a focus on two areas of difficulty: the additional burden of race and the categories of refugee classification on immigrant success. Ricento demonstrates that the term “visible minority” may negatively impact job mobility even if language is not a factor. This chapter provides an analysis of the bureaucratic process of refugee claimants and stressful situations encountered when working through a system that seems to prevent gaining more capital due to seemingly arbitrary rules and timelines. Analysis of policies for specific classifications of refugees also reveals illogical roadblocks which may leave people unable to access capital in language or work positions due to adherence to the refugee policies themselves.

In the sixth and final chapter, “Challenges and a Way Forward,” Ricento presents a wealth of research on the central issues refugees face globally and the economic and ideological agendas that may drive refugee policy rather than the actual needs of these populations, linking back to the analysis of the book’s case studies. Connecting again to the concept of exclusion as a central theme, the author demonstrates a common thread of countries opening doors yet placing multiple stops before truly allowing people past the threshold, resulting in extreme feelings of isolation and lack of mobility for refugees. An examination of the role of language as the key indicator for success in claiming and retaining professional capital in transnational moves is analyzed through past attempted English course curriculum design for newcomers, the prevalence of cultural transmission and assimilation through language, and the lack of opportunity for critical components to integrate with professional language. Ricento concludes by returning to the fundamental role of language in all refugee policy and capital and the desperate need for curriculum redesign and course access to better meet the needs of new groups arriving in Canada and the world at large. Hymes (1973) and Labov (1972) are revisited to reconnect the refugee experience with the power of language and positioning minorities as outsiders, and remind us that these root issues may persist even with policy changes. Ricento issues a warning that within these layers of language, the prevalence of othering, devaluing visible minorities and nonwestern languages, and lack of curriculum connection to professions must be addressed if the economic return desired by countries will come to fruition and for families to ever truly be welcomed.

## **Evaluation**

Ricento succeeds in exposing and sharing the realities of extreme loss of capital and life-altering hurdles within the refugee experience in Calgary, Canada. The comprehensive look at the difficulties from highly professionalized fields, specifically medicine, is incredibly profound given the years of training needed in one’s home country and inability to qualify for credential review in Calgary. They effectively demonstrate the direct connection between language ability, language value, and social capital in Calgary, extrapolating to Canada and worldwide regarding English. By sharing refugee stories and data, Ricento also exposes another layer of bias towards nonwestern, nonanglophone professionals, as those who lose the most significant capital tend to transition from non-English speaking, nonwhite, and nonwestern countries. Ricento humanizes the numbers beautifully and

painfully summarizes the pitfalls and tragedies along the way that place refugees in impossible situations. He also pays close attention to demonstrating the unique needs of refugees as opposed to other immigrant groups. The realistic picture painted is so vivid as one follows the paths of the families that the book begs for sharing even more case studies, or perhaps a future study with further followup on the families described in the book.

I appreciated that the author does not shy away from pointing to and examining the fact that race and language are inextricably linked and that this impact on refugee capital must be probed as well. The crucial inclusion of an example revolving around the use of a desired national language, even though refugees still face employment bias possibly due to race, is also revealing. This is such an important reminder that not only language may impede continuing one's career in a new country, but race may also play a part, adding another layer of oppression. The use of the Canadian terminology "visible minority" is so vital to understanding yet another level of the refugee journey and fight to reclaim capital. It would have been fantastic to see an additional entire chapter dedicated to a vignette of the single female Somalian refugee mentioned in earlier chapters. This may have provided more focus on the vulnerability of female refugees that the book mentions and pushed for further examination of the intersectionality of the racial, linguistic, and gender identities of minority refugees.

Ricento's analysis of obstacles for refugees to gain full social capital in Canada, in large part due to the value and ideologies of English, pairs well with Bourdieu's theories of capital, specifically linguistic capital and social capital (1986) and Blommaert's (2010) sociolinguistics of globalization and inequality. Phillipson's (1992) framework of linguistic imperialism holding English as a global expectation and driving standard for global language and ideology may be interwoven effectively as well. The combination of concrete Calgary labor market data supported by the day-by-day accounts of the refugee families provides an impactful step-by-step guide on how social capital is lost.

## Conclusions

Collectively, the book highlights, specifically in Canada, the substantial and perhaps intentional lack of process to legitimize the value of expertise held by highly skilled refugees and the urgent need for inclusive, specific, and flexible English language course design to support this transition. The reader is left with the grim reality that nations may impose policies based on the hegemony of linguistic and racial hierarchies to build new lower-wage labor forces, promoting policies of total assimilation into existing hierarchical arrangements, rather than embracing and supporting a more inclusive multiracial/multilingual national identity. The reader is also left with a realistic and hopeful solution for a way forward that may inform future English language practitioners, policymakers, credential specialists, and curriculum designers. The evaluation of firsthand refugee stories, and wide gaps in access to appropriate language courses show the crucial need to incorporate pathways for refugees to regain or retain their valuable skills from their home countries. The book centers on the authentic needs and experiences of refugees and justifies research that may involve refugees themselves in the design of language education courses (Karavas & Mitsikopoulou, 2021). The book's powerful combination of first-person experiences, supported by a robust quantitative backbone of data, renders it highly relevant to several fields, including adult ELL curriculum and pedagogy, language loss, refugee studies, language policy and planning, economic and labor policy studies, and migration studies.

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Vaish, V. (2020). *Translanguaging in Multilingual English Classrooms: An Asian Perspective and Contexts*. Springer (137 pp.). \$109.99 (US) (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-9811510861

Recently, translanguaging has gained much attention in multilingual education scholarship from scholars who question the strict division of languages. Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014) maintain that translanguaging is a creative meaning-making process that allows multilingual speakers to actively participate in linguistically diverse social contexts. Subsequently, a growing amount of research has extended the notion of translanguaging from its theoretical framework to include pedagogical implications. Missing from this body of literature is an attempt to apply translanguaging from an Asian perspective, particularly in terms of its practices in multilingual classrooms. In response to this need, Vinita Vaish's recently published book, *Translanguaging in Multilingual English Classrooms: An Asian Perspective and Contexts*, offers ways translanguaging can be implemented to support students who are struggling to read in English. This review provides a summary of the book and its key points, followed by an evaluation and implications for how teachers and teacher educators could use it.

## Summary

The purpose of the book is threefold: (a) to instruct on the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy that can help students to improve specific grammatical and comprehension skills; (b) to provide an enriched methodology for analyzing translanguaging practices by explaining the coding process of bilingual transcripts; and (c) to expand the discussion of translanguaging to include a pedagogic approach in superdiverse and multilingual educational settings. Throughout the book, Vaish makes the argument that translanguaging pedagogy leverages young bilingual learners' language practices in ways that foster general academic achievements.

This book is organized into nine chapters. The first chapter ("Introduction: Translanguaging and Translanguaging Pedagogies") is written by Angel M. Y. Lin, who gives historical accounts of the term translanguaging by highlighting its functional and integrative nature in multilingual pedagogy. Lin discusses how translanguaging is different from codeswitching/codemixing and code alternation because it counters the "code" model of language, which shares the traditional view that language systems are bounded. Additionally, Lin sorts translanguaging pedagogies into two strands: spontaneous translanguaging and planned translanguaging. According to Lin, the former indicates natural and spontaneous translingual communication mostly led by multilingual teachers, while the latter consists of preemptively designed pedagogies intended to scaffold multilingual development. More importantly, Lin notes that translanguaging pedagogies meet different meaning-making needs. As such, she concludes the introduction by highlighting the adaptation of translanguaging pedagogies to suit various educational contexts and settings.

In the second chapter (“The Linguistic Ecology of Singapore”), Vaish describes the landscape of languages in Singapore, the research site of her book. Since her study is focused on English education, the author gives an overview of the varieties of English in Singapore from two aspects: language in society and in education. Vaish explains that Singlish, the colloquial variety of English, has its own validated “grammatical and cultural properties” and is used widely by multilingual children. In addition, the author notes the bilingual educational policies in Singapore, which pair English with Malay, Tamil, or Chinese. This chapter concludes with a conceptualization of translanguaging in Singapore that shapes the main arguments of the book and is explored through an analysis of translanguaging pedagogy and its practices in English classes.

The third chapter (“Methodology 1: Translanguaging and the Classroom”) is dedicated to introducing contexts for two major projects within the text. The first project is a baseline study that investigated pedagogy in Singapore’s Language Support Program (LSP), and the second one is a Proof of Concept that is titled “Raise the Bilingual Approach to Reading.” Specifically, in the baseline study of pedagogy, Vaish observed monolingual classes in the LSPs in five primary schools. In the second project, Proof of Concept, the author elaborated translanguaging as an “organic, collaborative, and bottom-up” intervention and investigated its effects by observing three other primary schools that used translanguaging in their LSPs (p. 35). While presenting the purpose of her two research contexts, Vaish specifies that the LSPs of both projects are captured as “multilingual English classrooms,” as the programs were designed to teach content in English to students with diverse linguistic backgrounds (p. 32). This chapter concludes with a description of translanguaging pedagogy and literacy activities implemented in LSPs.

While chapter three deals with the general background of the study, chapter four (“Methodology 2: Coding Bilingual Transcripts”) provides coding procedures developed to analyze the collected video data. First, the observed data were transcribed to find the quantity and quality of talk. In terms of the quantity of talk, Vaish counted the number of English, Malay, and Chinese words and calculated the children’s mean length of translanguaged utterances. Quality of talk was coded in terms of motivations and contexts for translanguaging, questioning patterns, and interactional patterns. Lastly, Vaish describes the analysis of the eight children’s retelling stories.

In chapter five (“Comparing Monolingual and Bilingual Classrooms”), Vaish discusses the findings of her empirical study, particularly comparing the pedagogies implemented in monolingual and bilingual classes. According to the author, both monolingual and bilingual classes were introduced to translanguaging pedagogy, but its practices were identified differently in terms of the questioning patterns and the nature of interactions. As for the patterns of questions, both monolingual and bilingual classes did not differ in the quantity of questions, but compared to monolingual classes, lower-rank questions are more frequently observed in bilingual classes that require lower levels of cognitive competencies, such as procedural and factual questions. More contrasting changes made through translanguaging practices were the interactional patterns observed in the bilingual classes. Although students mostly engaged in responding to display questions, students’ interactions with teachers showed their “student critical turns” (p. 60) where students make extended oral utterances while applying target words and grammar in them.

Chapters six (“Interactional Patterns in the Malay Group”) and seven (“Interactional Patterns in the Chinese Group”) present the nature of interaction in translanguaging pedagogy in bilingual classes—one with English and Malay and the other with English and Chinese—by providing both quantitative and qualitative results. Specifically, Vaish analyzed the mean length of utterances by calculating the amounts the students spoke and coded the student and teacher interactions to understand the quality of the translanguaging classroom discourses. Contrary to the author’s

expectation, the quantitative results indicate that translanguaging pedagogy did not increase the amount that students spoke in English. However, qualitative results show that translanguaging could facilitate students' comprehension despite their limited proficiencies in English vocabulary and grammar. In addition, the patterns of interaction were found to be different among bilingual groups, such as Malay–English or Chinese–English. While translanguaging in Malay–English classes helped students interpret stories better and comprehend the different connotations of vocabulary, teachers in Chinese–English classes used translanguaging to facilitate students' metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic transfer of grammar knowledge. Vaish concludes chapter seven with the pitfalls of the unidirectionality of cross-linguistic transfer from mother tongue to target languages and calls for translanguaging design to solve the problem.

In the eighth chapter (“The Storytellers: Oral Retelling of Bilingual Children Struggling to Read in English”), Vaish shares bilingual students' oral retellings of stories they read in English. The students' narratives in English were analyzed qualitatively for the amount they spoke, the number of content words, and the episodic structure. The author analyzed multiple stories narrated by eight students individually, as the students' learning contexts were highly variable. By doing so, Vaish advocates for the case-based approach to understanding each student's improvement of narrative skills. From this analytic framework, Vaish presents a case of a student's oral retellings that benefited from translanguaging pedagogy. Lastly, in chapter nine (“Conclusion and Implications”), Vaish reiterates the findings of implementing translanguaging as pedagogy in the metro- and multilingual landscape of Singapore and interprets them in terms of expanding translanguaging as practice and theory. As for the implications of her study, Vaish proposes multidirectional transfer of linguistic repertoires of bilingual learners, the development of quantitative tools to assess translanguaging pedagogy, and the design of translanguaging pedagogic strategies for teachers.

## Evaluation

Vaish achieves her purposes by illustrating how translanguaging pedagogies can look in multilingual classrooms. Like previous studies that define translanguaging as an effective approach to bilingual education (García & Wei, 2014; Martínez et al., 2015; Paulsrud et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2013), Vaish upholds the benefits of translanguaging by demonstrating that emergent bilinguals engage in interaction replete with plurilingual resources and develop linguistic repertoires. Particularly in chapters six through eight, the descriptions of students' classroom interactions and story-retelling performances indicate their positioning as active meaning-makers in cross-linguistic transfer. Likewise, Canagarajah (2011), and García and Wei (2014) argue that translanguaging promotes creativity and criticality, leading to learners' new identity construction as multilinguals. Considering that multilingual practices are becoming the norm due to economic globalization (Pennycook, 2007), Vaish successfully shows that translanguaging classes become a transformative space where students transgress monolingual hegemony, respect cultural diversity, and engender self-reflexivity as competent bilinguals (Lau et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2020).

Another strength of this volume is the careful design of its research methodology—Vaish's research is empirically sound and has extensive data sets. As stated above, not only did the author compare monolingual and bilingual pedagogy throughout the baseline study, but she also developed an additional study, Proof of Concept, through which she identified the effects of translanguaging pedagogy. With such a research design, the book offers a plethora of examples and excerpts from the observed classrooms to illustrate how translanguaging serves in communication between teachers and students. In addition, readers benefit from a detailed description of the translanguaging training workshop that was given to the participating teachers. Chapter three demonstrates specific literacy

activities and translanguaging strategies along with key vocabulary words and the lists of books taught at the participating schools. Most of all, readers will appreciate the coding categories described in chapter four since the process of data analysis contributes to the scholastic measure of translanguaging practices. As García and Wei (2014) advocate for developing “standardized assessment ... in translanguaged ways” (p. 134), Vaish delineates the procedure of coding multilingual utterances, as well as some challenges to fully understanding emergent bilinguals’ proficiency.

Nonetheless, questions remain to consolidate translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy. Chapters six and seven elucidate the contrasting findings from the Malay–English groups and Chinese–English groups, implying that different bilingual groups show different interactional patterns. However, Vaish limits her discussion, indicating only the contexts of translanguaging pedagogy in Asia that are fundamentally different from those in the West (p. 127). In this regard, Cham (2019) argues that translanguaging can minimize “the cultural gap between the East and the West” (p. 36) in her study of English-mediated Chinese classes in Hong Kong. It is worth studying how translanguaging not only transforms students’ linguistic repertoires, but also functions as cultural scaffolding. Moreover, Vaish does not explicitly mention the dynamic process of practicing translanguaging from the teachers’ perspectives. Despite her elaboration of translanguaging as planned pedagogy, teachers’ beliefs and cognition about translanguaging strategies should be further studied because they are critical factors in determining the quality of classes, especially when teachers were taught using conventional bilingual models (Rabidge, 2019). It might be insightful to see how teachers reconceptualize their course designs from bilingual, biliteracy, and second language acquisition to translanguaging platforms.

## Conclusion

Overall, this book presents the pedagogic implications of translanguaging and the growing need for such pedagogy in Singapore due to the country’s multilingual landscapes, including English, Chinese, and Malay. The book emphasizes the processes and effects of implementing translanguaging in Asian countries, which transforms traditional hierarchical classroom cultures (Rabidge, 2019). It also offers various translanguaging practices that teachers can adopt when designing student-oriented classes to scaffold learners’ comprehension and performance. Considering the niches that Vaish fills, the book will attract practitioners—especially English language teachers, English training course instructors, policymakers, and school administrators. This volume is also ideal for academics who are engaging with emergent bilingual learners, designing a solid methodology for multilingual classroom research, and interested in the benefits of bi/multilingualism and translingual pedagogies.

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Macedo, D. (Ed.) (2019), *Decolonizing Foreign Language Education: The Misteaching of English and Other Colonial Languages*. Routledge (287 pp.), \$42.36 (US) (Paperback), ISBN: 978-1138320697

Interdisciplinary pedagogical interventions in second language education take time to be produced. Reading Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera* more than ten years ago in my doctoral studies, I would start envisioning curricular and pedagogical interventions among future generalist and bilingual teachers in Texas. There is no doubt that the critical scholarship published in English on the teaching and learning of English and other additional colonial and Indigenous languages taking issues of power has been producing important contributions in the last twenty years. In this urgent envisioning journey, we find that newer scholarship in our field continues deconstructing these issues of power and language, now framing these interventions considering a decolonial turn in the social sciences and humanities, and which incorporates noncolonial epistemologies in this dialogue (Dos Santos, 2014).

## Summary

*Decolonizing Foreign Language Education: The Misteaching of English and Other Colonial Languages* (hereafter DFLE) deconstructs hegemonic constructions that reify monocultural and monolingual ideologies associated with foreign and second language teaching of colonial languages in the Western world, and provides approaches that value and dignify the multicultural and multilingual identities of students (with an implicit focus in the United States).

The volume starts with a foreword by Michael DeGraff and is divided into eleven chapters. Bringing his linguistic and activist expertise as a US-based Haitian scholar, DeGraff calls for educators in the world, in particular the Global South, to join forces for the promotion of linguistic human rights of decolonization, opposing hegemonic oppression such as the Linguicism which is a New Racism in Haiti where Kreyol-dominant children receive instruction in French. It is urgent to decolonize the formal education of 40 percent of the world population that receives education that is foreign to them (xxii). DeGraff believes that the teaching of foreign languages should incorporate the value and history of children's entire linguistic repertoires, framed in a new transdisciplinary paradigm in which different local and international institutions actively participate.

In chapter 2, ("Between Globalization and Decolonization: Foreign Languages in the Cross-Fire"), Claire Kramsch argues that critical applied linguistics, and cultural translation can create a bridge between the social sciences and the humanities and doing so foreign language education, positioned between national and global orders, can be disconnected from colonialism and neoliberal-

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ism. To decolonize the field dominated by Anglophone epistemologies, Kramersch argues, will mean a collective effort to question notions from English into another language, to reconstruct historical meanings, and to engage with theories and concepts in other educational and linguistic spaces without judging them as less relevant, and start conceiving these concepts in terms of another, framed in a process called cultural translation.

In chapter 3 (“Time for a Paradigm Shift in U.S. Foreign Language Education? Revisiting Rationales, Evidence and Outcomes”), Timothy Reagan and Terry A. Osborne contend that in order to get a new perspective in the field, we need to start considering societal and linguistic factors to monitor two different types of programs: Language Fluency Focused Programs (LFFPs) and Language for Educated Persons Programs (LEPPs). These programs reconsider the value of studying a foreign language at the K–12 level and will prepare students to become multilingual in the target language, as well as to be cognizant of better understanding their first language and welcome other epistemologies that construct realities in different ways.

In chapter 4 (“SLA for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Disciplinary Progress, Transdisciplinary Relevance, and the Bi/Multilingual Turn”), Lourdes Ortega details the recent disciplinary trends of epistemological diversity, usage-based understanding, interpretive and qualitative research methodologies, and the eclectic contexts for different types of learners found in the field of second language acquisition. Based on this review, Ortega foresees transdisciplinary intersections drawn from empirical evidence across late second-language learning from situations that are monolingual and bi/multilingual and thus sees the potential of the field to foster bilingualism as a societal asset not just for elites but also for linguistic minority populations.

In chapter 5 (“Toward Decolonizing Heritage Language Education”), using the lenses of her own *testimonio* as a heritage language learner and educator and of a heritage language teacher, Theresa Austin provides a reflective and needed understanding for this least researched academic field of language education in the US. Detailing issues of language ideologies, literacies, and cultural extinction or revitalization associated with community heritage languages, Austin believes that HL educators can counteract intergenerational linguistic and cultural heritage losses and thus make a contribution to decolonizing language education in the nation.

In chapter 6 (“Decolonizing Foreign, Second, Heritage, and First Languages: Implications for Education”), Ofelia García argues that because autonomous languages have been used as a tool for colonization throughout history, it is important to consider them as systems of complex and dynamic language practices that speakers engage in, and a process named translanguaging, in which they deploy their full linguistic capacities to make meaning without regard to the boundaries of hegemonic languages. Advocating a climate of expanding and encouraging the translingual opportunities for Latinx students in the US., García finds that these decolonizing efforts can have effects on our knowledge of how language education programs can be restricting opportunities for minoritized language learners.

In chapter 7 (“From Translanguaging to Translingual Activism”), Alastair Pennycook extends the political implications drawn from the recent research on translingualism by favoring a more activist dimension in the decolonization of foreign language education. Focusing on English language teaching (ELT), Pennycook argues for the need to understand the local uses and exclusions of English as a global language, proposes to see language education as multimodal semiotics, polycentrism and the development of critical activist resourceful speakers, and embraces a critical pedagogy of the

commons, based in recent anarchist studies, and in which new forms of expression and political action are possible and embraced to decolonize public spaces such as schools, and languages such as English.

In chapter 8 (“A Multilingual Perspective on Translanguaging”), Jeff MacSwan, stressing the importance of translanguaging as a pedagogical framework that fosters the use of language in school as they are used in children’s homes and communities, offers empirical linguistic evidence to present an integrated multilingual model on individual multilingualism within the context of universal multilingualism. Drawing from codeswitching research, and distancing from the unitary model of multilingualism in which bilinguals have a single undifferentiated grammar system, supported by Ofelia García and associates, MacSwan posits that bilinguals have a single system with many shared grammatical resources but with some internal language-specific differentiation as well. Thus, in this integrated perspective, codeswitching and translation can be seen as instances of translanguaging, as the research has already documented.

In chapter 9 (“English Language Learning in Globalized Third Spaces: From Monocultural Standardization to Hybridized Translanguaging”), Donald Hemphill and Erin Blakely provide an analysis of the colonial effects of deficit-based English language learning programs in the world to then offer a detailed account for promoting learning as identity-making process. Doing so, students will re-create new meanings and identities, bring their funds of knowledge drawn from using English beyond the classroom, and bring conflict, translanguaging practices or common engagement as examples of creating hybridized third spaces for versatility and agility in the potential construction of their transnational hybrid identities.

In chapter 10 (“Mapping the Web of Foreign Language Teaching and Teacher Education”), Hatice Çelebi, drawing from her experience as a nonnative English language educator, reviews the educational policies for EFL Education and Teacher Education in her native Turkey. Intersecting concepts related to governability in Ethnography Policy Studies, the devaluation of teachers’ salaries in the knowledge-based economy, and the effects of “native speaker policy” in the teaching field, Çelebi implies that there need to be more educational courses on how these issues of identity formation are investigated and explored in foreign language teacher education programs.

Finally, in chapter 11 (“Decolonizing World Language Education: Toward Multilingualism 2”), François Victor Tochon proposes a change of mindset in critical foreign language education: it fosters a peaceful cross-cultural evolution through multilingualism and a clash of identities in which teachers question notions such as hegemony and the language market issues, and their indoctrination for reducing languages to structures and standardized assessments. This decolonization of Foreign Language Education will depart from the monocultural and monolingual box by educating students not only to reflect on their own culture, but also to get involved with other cultures in prolonged immersion experiences, collaboration among local bilinguals and transnational program experiences that prioritize mutual connections.

## **Evaluation**

After reading this edited volume, I find the following important elements. The first one is that the book is a call to activist efforts to teachers for recognizing the multilingual practices students bring to school from their communities. A second important element is the inclusion of some authors’ *testimonios* (Austin and Çelebi) and academic trajectories in the field (DeGraff and Macedo) in the development of ideas in their academic contributions. The presence of translanguaging pedagogies and research as well as the explicit or implicit need for transdisciplinary work (that includes epistemologies

generated in other languages than English) in language education and second language acquisition in the content of some chapters constitute the last important elements that interweave the chapters.

On the other hand, there were three features that might have been better approached. First, the term *decolonization* was not clearly defined in the introductory chapter; readers were invited to associate decolonizing with deconstruction, and critical analyses of current second and foreign language education give priority to white western thought and programs. Though references to the works on coloniality and power by Mignolo (2007) and Quijano (2007) (in Garcia's chapter) and decolonization as metaphor by Tuck and Young (2012) (in Çelebi's chapter) were mentioned in individual chapters, a brief account of these terms and others, such as Global North and Global South in decolonial studies, in the academy along with other authors such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos could have been a key element interwoven throughout the chapters. Second, it would have been helpful to have a conclusions or afterword chapter that brings together the unique contributions and gives an overview of the next decolonial challenges in the field. Lastly, a very important missing component of the edited volume was the lack of multilingual scholars based in the Global South (who work with other colonial languages and with other minoritized or Indigenous languages) and who adopt different types of reporting their decolonizing visions and research, including *testimonios* and academic trajectories through translanguaging in English and other (colonial) languages.

## Conclusion

In short, this book on DFLE edited by Donald Macedo fills an urgent void in the decolonial foreign and second language education literature by providing critical analyses drawn from the visionary scholarship of transformational authors such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks and Lila Bartolomé, and inspiring us as readers to continue the decolonizing turn with the pathways created by the contributing authors. United by a common call for the recognition of multilingual speakers' identities and their translanguaging practices in this neocolonial world, the book is a must read for anyone interested in new transformations in teaching and learning English and other colonial languages in contemporary times. The authors have inspired us to deconstruct our house of languages and start imagining *nuevos futuros*.

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## Submissions

### Submission Preparation Checklist

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors that do not adhere to these guidelines.

- The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).
- The submission file is in Microsoft Word document file format.
- Where available, URLs for the references have been provided.
- The text is double-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics, rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures, and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end.
- The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the Author Guidelines.
- The submission meets international standards of scholarly English and has been edited by a professional editor proficient in American English to ensure that it is free of grammatical, spelling, and other common language errors.
- The submission has been formatted following the 7th edition of APA style.

### Author Guidelines

**All submissions must be in APA Format** (*Handbook of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition) and should not exceed 9,000 words in total length (including references). Please use headings and subheadings to demarcate important sections and include a word count for your paper. Remove any language that identifies the author or institution for blind review purposes.

Submission to the *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (IJLCLE)* will be handled through an online submission system. Articles should be submitted as a Word file in Times New Roman font, 12 points, with one-inch margins, double spaced. Insert page numbers in lower right, with the first page of the manuscript starting as page 1. Do not add page numbers to the abstract or title page.

**Abstracts** should contain no more than 200 words. The names of the authors and institutions should only appear on the title page. Remove these identifiers from the abstract.

**Book Reviews** of recent publications in areas specified above are also welcome. They should not exceed 2,500 words including the references.

## Structure of Submissions

Each manuscript should include the following: Title page; abstract; six keywords; introduction, methods, findings, discussion; acknowledgments; declaration of intent statement; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (as appropriate); figure(s) with captions (as appropriate).

## Authors' Information

All authors should include their full name and affiliation on the cover page of the manuscript. One of the authors will need to be identified as the corresponding author by providing his/her email address. Authors' affiliations are the affiliations where the research was conducted. If any of the named coauthors change their affiliation during the peer review process, the new affiliation can be specified in a footnote. No changes to affiliation can be made after your paper is accepted.

## Funding

Authors should provide, if applicable, all details required by their funding and grant-awarding bodies.

## Figures & Tables

Please include in the body of the papers all related components: figures, images, charts, graphs, footnotes, references, appendices, or other relevant information.

Figures should be of high quality (1200 dpi for line art, 600 dpi for grayscale and 300 dpi for color, at the correct size). Figures should be supplied in the following file formats: EPS, PS, BMP, PNP, JPEG, GIF.

Tables should present new information rather than duplicating what is in the text. Readers should be able to interpret the table without reference to the text. Please supply editable files.

## Third-Party Material in your Paper

Authors should obtain the necessary permission to reuse third-party material in their article. The use of short extracts of text and some other types of material is usually permitted, on a limited basis, for the purposes of criticism and review without securing formal permission. If authors wish to include any material in their paper for which they do not hold copyright, they should obtain written permission from the copyright owner prior to submission.

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## Research Misconduct Policy

The editors of *IJLCLE* will take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In the event that the editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal, the editor shall follow the Committee on Publication Ethics' guidelines in dealing with allegations.

## Submission Guidelines for Special Issues

The *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (IJLCLE)* publishes Special Issues on a specific topic or theme related to literacy, culture, and language education from multiple perspectives. If you are interested in becoming a Guest Editor, find below some guidelines to consider when putting together your proposal.

A Special Issue is a collection of scholarly papers that comprise a specific topic and it should be of relevance to a wide range of inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary readers. Authors should understand that the same criteria of originality, quality, and significance apply to articles in Special Issues as to regular articles.

Please note that a Special Issue is not a Conference Proceedings, but rather a scholarly collection of selected articles from a wide range of perspectives in charge of a Guest Editor(s) in coordination with the Editor-in-Chief. The specific topics for a Special Issue may originate from discussions at conferences, academic meetings, symposia, panels, or be solicited with a Call for Proposals, etc.

A full Special Issue to be included in *IJLCLE* should include approximately 8-10 articles. The Special Issue should not exceed a total of 90,000 words (8-10 articles) and an introductory essay written by the Guest Editor(s). Book reviews of recent publications in relation to the Special Issue are also welcome. Book reviews should not exceed 2,500 words including the bibliography. **All submissions must be in APA Format** (*Handbook of the American Psychological Association*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition).

If you are interested in becoming a Special Issue Guest Editor, you need to submit a formal proposal to the Managing Editor at [ijlcle@indiana.edu](mailto:ijlcle@indiana.edu) by clearly indicating the details of your proposed Special Issue. After we receive your proposal, the Editorial Team will carefully review it before its acceptance or rejection. For any questions, please email the Managing Editor at the above-mentioned email address.

### About the Guest Editor(s)

**The Guest Editor(s)** should be an expert(s) on the subject of the Special Issue and ideally will be sufficiently well connected through professional networks and social media to attract renowned authors and high-quality articles to *IJLCLE*. The Guest Editor(s) will be in charge of developing a proposal summarizing the rationale and content for the Special Issue.

**The Guest Editor should also have a clear understanding of the nature of their commitment** and their obligations. They should understand the journal's schedule and be aware of the limits on article length. Ultimately, the Editor-in-Chief will be responsible for the overall content published in *IJLCLE*.

**A formal Special Issue proposal** should include the following:

- The title of the Special Issue
- Name(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of the Guest Editor(s)
- Brief objective of the Special Issue
- Brief description and significance of the Special Issue
- Possible audience for the Special Issue
- 400-word abstract for each paper (with names and affiliations of each author).
- A detailed timeline for paper submissions and revisions
- Detailed biographical information on the Guest Editor(s)

- Detailed biographical information on the authors/contributors

### **Guest Editor(s)' Responsibilities**

Papers will be reviewed using *IJLCLE*'s standard procedures. Guest Editor(s) will be responsible for:

- Collecting the papers from the authors/contributors
- Identifying and recruiting potential blind reviewers
- Rejecting the initial submitted papers if they do not meet quality standards even before sending to the blind reviewers
- Sending the selected papers to two blind reviewers per article
- Receiving the blind reviewers' comments and sending them back to the authors
- Receiving the modified/revised papers from the authors
- Checking the modified/revised papers
- Sending the modified/revised versions to the blind reviewers again for their final approval (if possible)
- Receiving the final approval from the blind reviewers (if possible)
- Proofreading the whole content of the volume
- Overseeing all other tasks associated with the editorial work related to the Special Issue
- Writing a concise introduction that will describe the content of the contributions to the Special Issue
- Sending the final proofs to the *IJLCLE* Editor-in-Chief for final approval, production, and publication

Please note that the double-blind peer review of each paper will be carried out via *IJLCLE*'s online submission and peer review system managed by the Guest Editor(s). Once reviews are returned, the Guest Editor(s) will need to decide whether to accept or reject a given article, and this will be communicated to the Editor-in-Chief for their confirmation of such decision. The Editor-in-Chief will make an executive decision if any disagreements emerge during the editorial process.

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