
“It’s Our Job to Normalize It”: Incorporating a Translanguaging Pedagogy into Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

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ABSTRACT: Children’s language practices are critical to identity and can be prioritized by incorporating a translanguaging lens into elementary classrooms. Such incorporation varies based on an educator’s awareness and skill set, making it essential for pre-service teachers (PSTs) to learn to create linguistically safe spaces. This article discusses activities PSTs engaged in to examine their language associations, consider how this impacted their chosen pedagogies, and explore the use of a translanguaging framework to push against harmful associations.

KEYWORDS: Translanguaging, funds of knowledge, emergent bilinguals, educator preparation, qualitative research

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Six junior level pre-service teachers (PSTs) sit with me, an elementary literacy university professor, around my dining room table, steaming cups of coffee and tea in hand. We are engaged in conversation around elementary students’ rights to bring their whole linguistic selves to the table in reading, writing, and discussion-based classroom activities.

“We want to acknowledge that we all bring lots of different ways of communicating into different spaces, we all translanguage,” I said, “and we can tend to create a false separation between different linguistic codes, when it should all be welcome wherever we go.”

“Mmhhmm,” one PST agreed. “It’s just normal.”

Normal. It had taken us quite some time to get to this point, to the recognition that “normal” should mean incorporation of *all* linguistic codes, rather than a set form of Standardized English (Hudley & Mallinson, 2010) dialect or language. And while the path wasn’t a

straight line, this article will explain how we moved toward *inclusion*, rather than *exclusion*, of linguistic diversity in an elementary classroom.

Rationale

Children's diverse language practices are critical to their identities, and it is an educator's privilege to connect children's linguistic funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) to classroom curricula. A natural space to prioritize students' dynamic language backgrounds is through teachers' incorporation of linguistic diversity into the elementary classroom by using diverse texts, encouraging code-meshing (Young, 2013) and translanguaging (García, 2009), and creating a classroom community that provides space for students' unique language use (Zoeller & Briceño, 2023).

Such incorporation varies, though, based on an educator's awareness and skill set, and Standardized English remains the pervasive, and oftentimes only, language valued and accepted in classrooms (Hudley & Mallinson, 2010). This makes it critical to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to prioritize discussion around creating a linguistically safe space. Yet, research shows PSTs often feel a disconnect between such dialogue and what they are doing/seeing while in field placements (Pontier & Deroo, 2022; Zenkov & Pytash, 2022).

Therefore, this article will discuss sustained activities PSTs engaged in outside of traditional class sessions and in a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) of learning, to explore their own language associations, and to begin considering how these language associations impacted their pedagogical work with students, as well as how they might use a translanguaging framework to push against limiting and possibly harmful associations.

Literature Review

In elementary classrooms across the United States, there are more children from diverse language backgrounds than ever before (Rowe, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that the overall percentage of emergent bi/multilingual learners in United States public schools grew from 9.4% (4.6 million students) in 2011 to 10.6% (5.3 million students) in 2021, demonstrating a significant increase across one decade (NCES, 2024). Yet, the nation's mostly white pre-service teacher population has become only slightly more diverse since the 1980s, with 2021 data from NCES showing that 80% of K-12 public school teachers identified as white (NCES, 2023). Further, pre-service teachers' perceptions of their preparation to work with students from multicultural backgrounds in ways that value and support these learners' cultural and linguistic experiences indicate many believe in the power of this work, but do not feel equipped to engage in it once they enter their own classrooms (Taylor et al., 2016). Given this situation, the nation's mostly white pre-service teacher population needs additional support from their university educator preparation programs in examining how their own

language backgrounds (largely English-only) impact their choices of classroom materials and activities, and to subsequently expand such choices to better reflect the range of language expertise represented by their students (Bell & Busey, 2021). Without this critical work in teacher preparation, the assumption is that curriculum and pedagogy favoring one overarching language or dialect is adequate for all young learners; lack of action does not demonstrate neutrality, after all, but sides with dominant societal norms (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 2016). The normalization of Standardized English is a system that should be pushed against, to create a space for emergent bilingual and multilingual students to engage their full linguistic and cultural selves within the safety of classroom spaces (García & Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging as a Framework

Translanguaging as a pedagogical underpinning can provide pre-service teachers with a framework from which to consider how they prioritize, rather than dissuade, linguistic diversity in their classrooms, with translanguaging being “the ways bilinguals draw on their full linguistic toolkits in order to process information, make meaning, and convey it to others” (Orellana & García, 2014, p. 386). Pacheco and Miller (2016) add, “These languages are part of one linguistic system that an individual strategically accesses depending on the context” (p. 533), which encourages not only greater academic meaning-making, but a student’s ability to be strategic in their language use and choices (Canagarajah, 2013). A translanguaging lens, then, requires that teachers invite *all* children’s language practices into the classroom to assist them in making deeper connections to and meaning from curriculum (García & Klieffgen, 2010).

As Orellana and García (2014) ask in conversation, “What would it mean in classrooms if we broke out of a monolingualist frame that assumes a separation of language and reinforces the importance of keeping them separate - a framework that schools have historically perpetuated” (p. 387)? Such an acknowledgment and push against powerful monolingual structures would allow children to incorporate their linguistic funds of knowledge, those valuable language-based resources and lived experiences they bring with them, to the classroom (González et al., 2005). This would not only serve them as meaning-makers but also encourage those around them to see linguistic diversity of all kinds as *asset* instead of *deficit*.

Related to the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice is the theoretical framework of raciolinguistics. Raciolinguistics aims to examine the relationship between language and race, and how the voices of people of color are often erased from academic spaces in favor of a standardized view of “correct” codes in which to speak (Alim et al., 2016). When educators commit to welcoming students’ translanguaging practices into their classrooms, they must also examine their own language ideologies, and whether/how these ideologies elevate the language practices of some racial groups while denigrating others (Baker-Bell, 2020). Classroom communities that prioritize translanguaging can push against racialized views of language which perpetuate the belief that the linguistic codes of people of color are somehow lesser than; as such, these

classrooms actively choose to empower multilingual/multidialectal speakers to bring their whole linguistic selves to school (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Disconnect Between Theory and Practice

A translanguaging lens such as that detailed above, though, requires university educator preparation programs to prepare pre-service teachers for multilingual and multidialectal classroom spaces. As Orellana and García (2014) state, this lens requires

a teacher that understands that teaching is not just the transmission of knowledge, but the co-construction of knowledge with students. Translanguaging challenges traditional concepts of language, traditional concepts of bilingualism, traditional concepts of bilingual education, but also traditional concepts of what teaching is, because it takes a teacher who deeply believes in this process and who engages students where they are. (p. 388)

For emerging educators to actively and explicitly value the languages and cultures of all students (Cummins, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2010; Zapata & Laman, 2016), “verbally and through actions” (Rowe, 2018), a translanguaging lens must be explored and practiced within the context of PSTs’ teacher preparation work. And yet, in many cases, there is a disconnect between translanguaging, linguistically-validating pedagogy, and teacher education curriculum. As Baker-Bell (2020) said, “I would never have imagined that the preparation... I received from my teacher education program would contribute to me reproducing the same racial and linguistic inequities I was hoping to dismantle” (p. 4).

And therein lies the challenge. While many university educator preparation programs incorporate critical theory and practices valuing linguistic diversity into their scholarship and coursework, pre-service teachers often feel a disconnect between what they learn in their teacher preparation program and what they encounter in field experiences and student teaching (Zenkov & Pytash, 2022). As P-12 teaching environments are increasingly fraught with philosophical divides brought on by outside political and communal discourses (Geller, 2020), colleges of teacher education must remain committed to welcoming “the challenge of examining how to address such issues in our classrooms and those of our future teacher students” (Zenkov & Pytash, 2022, p. 60).

A “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) of learning, situated between theory and practice, offers PSTs and university faculty the opportunity to dive more deeply into discussions and interrogation of harmful practices related to linguistic diversity in classrooms. Bhabha (1994) refers to this third space as the place in which cultures meet, and where societal boundaries are blurred and called into question. In the third space exists “the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152). Where binaries often exist, participants push against them, and work to “value the uncertainty and reflection” (Solsken et al., 2000, p. 179) present in opening space for new dialogue. Without significant time dedicated to and focused on examining previously held linguistic beliefs and – critically – how these beliefs play out in classroom spaces, pre-service teachers are destined to repeat the practices of teachers they have had

themselves rather than interrogate how their own prior beliefs might contribute to a classroom space in which certain languages/dialects are privileged over others (Zeichner, 2010; Zenkov & Pytash, 2022). Theory is brought to life through practice, and when pre-service teachers partner with university faculty to openly dialogue about the intersections between theory and practice, as well as the tensions that exist between them in our current political and cultural climates, PSTs are “positioned as pedagogues, engaging in authentic but manageable instructional tasks and in unique ways that challenge their assumptions about teachers’ capacities” (Zenkov & Pytash, 2022, p. 68).

As Genishi and Dyson (2009) stated, “We see distressingly few classrooms and curricula that allow children either the time or space to learn about or through language in a way that they choose or that enables them to utilize what they already know” (p. 16). Working directly with PSTs on changing this reality, then, must be a priority for their university educators.

Participants and Methodology

It was with all this in mind that I engaged in an IRB-approved qualitative research study with a total of 14 pre-service teachers (across two separate semesters) at a small liberal arts college in the rural US Midwest. Throughout their educational preparation, these pre-service teachers completed field experiences and student teaching within a 30-mile vicinity, across which the demographics of the K-12 student populations varied greatly. In the surrounding rural and suburban districts, most K-12 students identified as white and spoke Standardized English. Students in more urban districts approximately 25 miles away from the university identified as 60% Black, 20% Latinx, 14% White, and 6% other races; 10% of this total population were emerging bilinguals, with the primary languages spoken at home being Spanish (67% of emerging bilinguals), Swahili, Arabic, and Nepali. PST participants and I focused our study on the following questions, both of which prioritized a movement toward translanguaging as a central pedagogy:

- 1) How do my lived linguistic experiences impact my classroom incorporation of language diversity into text choices and pedagogical practices, and
- 2) How can I use what I learned about myself and my associations to prioritize linguistically diverse text choices and pedagogical practices?

I identify as a white, middle-class female, who grew up speaking Standardized English. As such, I acknowledge my historically privileged position in terms of both race and language; while this limits my perspective, I also see it as my responsibility to join the conversation around intentionally opening translanguaging spaces for linguistically diverse students in elementary classrooms. Twelve of the PSTs who participated in the study self-identified as white women, and two self-identified as women of color, with all being fluent in Standardized English and the two women of color speaking Black Language (Baker-Bell, 2020) at home. Besides these examples, the PSTs did not speak any additional languages fluently. One had a close relationship with a Spanish speaking family (her fiancé’s family was from El Salvador). Participants’ gender and language backgrounds are representative of the current majority of PSTs and practicing teachers

(Rowe, 2018), thus making it critical that they deeply examine their own language associations before working closely with students from diverse language backgrounds.

The first 12-week iteration of this research study (with eight total PSTs) took place in fall 2021 within the context of a literacy methods course, with activities and discussions not being tied to grades, and an IRB protocol requiring that I remain unaware as to who had agreed their comments/work could be included in this study until the conclusion of the semester and submission of grades. The second year of study (with six different PSTs) began during the fall 2022 semester, with the bulk of our work occurring outside the confines of coursework in spring 2023, so we could dive into the research questions even more deeply. These six new PSTs volunteered to participate in this spring 2023 12 week-long intensive study, and in doing so, agreed to come to my home once a week for this work. Due to the similarities between the study across these two years, data from each group is discussed and analyzed together.

In both iterations, these PSTs (eight in fall 2021, six in fall 2022/spring 2023) and I engaged in a series of discussions and activities focused on our overarching research questions around beliefs in and use of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach (García & Wei, 2014; García & Kleyn, 2016; García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). In considering research question one, which looked at how our lived linguistic experiences impacted our classroom incorporation of language diversity into text choices and pedagogical practices, PSTs engaged in two activities: the first consisted of reactions to and discussion around language-focused quotes from scholarly literature. The second question asked for PSTs' initial associations/reactions to languages used in particular children's books. In considering research question two, which asked PSTs to use what they had learned about themselves to further prioritize linguistically diverse texts and pedagogical practices, PSTs engaged in their third and fourth activities; they chose their own linguistically diverse texts for analysis and determination of classroom use, and then they connected the dots by brainstorming pedagogical practices to increase translanguaging practices within their field experiences, student teaching classrooms, and beyond.

During these experiences, I gathered data in the form of anecdotal notes, participant notes, and audio recordings I later transcribed. In the first semester of the research, I collected this data across three meetings. In the following year's second iteration, our study primarily took place over 12 meetings across 12 weeks; I took anecdotal notes and collected audio recordings during each meeting, and participants submitted their own reflective notes six times. Analysis included identifying themes in the data while simultaneously examining "the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) present. More specifically, through the use of inductive thematic analysis (ITA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012), I examined the data to identify themes related to the research questions we examined together: 1) How did PSTs describe their personal connections to and beliefs about classroom incorporation of language diversity into text choices and pedagogical practices, and 2) How did PSTs describe what they learned about themselves and their associations to move toward prioritizing linguistically diverse text choices and pedagogical practices? This ITA analysis followed a multi-step process: 1) familiarizing myself with the data and taking initial notes, 2) conducting an initial coding of the data, 3) searching for themes

that brought together similarities/patterns in the codes, 4) reviewing the themes and checking them against existing data and adjusting themes as necessary, and 5) naming and defining the themes. I acknowledged throughout data analysis that my positionality as a white, Standardized English speaking educator might impact my interpretation of qualitative data because I came to this research primarily from the perspective of an educator who has worked extensively with linguistically diverse students, but has not often personally navigated translanguaging spaces. My positionality may have affected the themes I identified as I coded for common trends. Because of this limitation, I carefully attended to step four of the ITA process to ensure the themes I identified were consistent with the data. Further, PST participants bolstered triangulation of data by reviewing transcripts and evaluating the themes I had identified, which led to adjustments in overall findings, therefore increasing the validity of the study (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).

Findings

In weekly sessions across the course of twelve weeks, these pre-service teachers engaged in activities to examine their linguistic associations and to then push against any monolingual tendencies they identified within themselves to work toward the use of translanguaging practices as a pedagogical framework (Baker & Wright, 2017; García & Wei, 2014). This work took place across four distinct activities and subsequent discussions, from which inductive thematic analysis revealed the emergence of common themes.

Activity One: Engaging With the Scholarship

In our first activity, PSTs reflected on singular quotes from scholarly readings, focused on the valuing and *undervaluing* of linguistic diversity in schools, and examined their own experiences with linguistically diverse children's literature and literacy activities. As such, this activity aligned with our first research question, which specifically asked participants to reflect on their own lived linguistic experiences and how these experiences impacted their responses to the quotes they were asked to analyze and discuss. While the quotes are not directly from scholarship focused on translanguaging, each was chosen to scaffold PSTs' understanding of the history of educational spaces denying linguistically diverse students their right to speak and write using the entirety of their linguistic repertoires. PSTs wrote their initial thoughts, and those who wished to share communicated their thoughts with the group, sharing how their thoughts led them to prioritize or *deprioritize* (oftentimes unintentionally) the use of translanguaging in classrooms. This exploration of quotes allowed participants to begin engaging with the third space (Bhabha, 1994) of learning and teaching, as it brought together theory and personal experience through conversation around each PST's connections to and disconnections from the quotes and concepts themselves.

This exploration began with a quote from *Literacy in the Welcoming Classroom* (Allen, 2010), which read,

Home language. It's a comforting phrase, isn't it, conjuring images of families chatting around the television, dinner table, or front porch; of dads or grandmas telling stories about relatives' escapades, of moms or grandpas crooning the baby to sleep; of siblings and cousins making up games and arguing about the rules. Yet too often in our country's educational history, we have at best ignored home language as a valuable linguistic resource and at worst denigrated and even prohibited its use in school. (pp. 27-28)

The pre-service teachers were each uncomfortable with the idea that school would prohibit the linguistic backgrounds of students. One asked, "We would never take a home away from a family - so why is it okay for people to take their home language away?" Another added,

It talks about how home language is comforting... if it's in school, but there you feel it's uncomfortable... for some students, like you're, you want them to be comfortable but, yet, you're taking away their comfort. Like, a piece of them, kind of.

Picking up on the word "prohibit," another PST said,

It said they even prohibit home language in school, that makes it seem like it's something harmful. Why is it prohibited? Like, it's the language you speak at home, you're supposed to feel comfortable speaking it, and sometimes schools make it seem like it's this horrible thing, and you're not allowed to.

Another PST focused on the importance of school celebrating every student's identity, stating,

I looked at the dads or grandmas telling stories about relatives and stuff like that, cause that's the stuff that... like, when I think of my family, I think of, like, holidays, and playing games, and if you, like, identify with, that's a part of yourself that you identify with, that's a part of yourself that you identify with, but it's ignored - you don't want your identity to be ignored, or prohibited, or considered harmful, cause then it's, who am I if I don't have pieces of myself?

As the conversation unfolded, five of the pre-service teachers who grew up speaking Standardized English specifically stated they felt disconnected from the experiences of students whose language backgrounds were not valued in school, as they each realized they did not have to consider whether their language would be accepted within an academic setting.

We then moved on to a quote from Sonia Nieto's *Language, Culture, and Teaching* (2002), which asserted,

Sometimes bilingualism is highly valued. This is usually the case with those who are formally educated and have status and power in society. At other times, bilingualism is seen as a sign of low status. This is usually the case with those who are poor and powerless within their society, even if they happen to speak a multitude of languages. (p. 81)

While Allen's quote brought up feelings of discomfort regarding student support, PSTs were surprised by Nieto's assertion. Though they acknowledged the validity of Nieto's

claim, they wrestled openly with how and why a linguistic hierarchy like this exists. “Why is bilingualism from a person who knows English and learns another praised and when someone who knows another language learns English - it is *expected*?” Another questioned, “What is the difference between these two scenarios? Why does it matter the socioeconomic status? Bilingualism should equal social benefits, communication, and professional benefits.” A third started with a question that ended with a declaration of sorts: “Who decided certain languages are more privileged? (...) Someone wealthy... someone in power... someone racist... someone who wants to be in control.” As all the PSTs grew up speaking English, their many questions reflected the fact that they had not previously needed to contend with the reality of linguistic hierarchies in their own language-based experiences.

Our third quote came from April Baker-Bell’s text, *Linguistic Justice* (2020), where she asserts, “Despite decades of research on Black Language, its survival since enslavement, and its linguistic imprint on the nation and globe (Smitherman, 2006), Black people and Black Language scholars keep having to remind y’all that it is a legit language” (p. 12). In response, PST comments revealed themes of both *recognition of* and *resistance to* the linguistic status quo. PSTs who spoke Standardized English exclusively responded with many questions, as they had not directly experienced situations in which those around them denigrated their language background. “What makes a language stick?” one asked. “Power? Racism? Classism?” Another simply stated, “A dark part of our history as a country is still present.” Another PST expressed frustration, saying, “It just seems like, why is this still an issue?” One participant of color wrote, “So true. What else needs to be said?” The second PST of color acknowledged, “some Black families, like mine, try to shy away from their language or features like hair in order to pass as ‘professional.’” Here, the two PSTs who were fluent in Black Language found they connected personally with Baker-Bell’s statement, as they reflected on past experiences where they and their families had to hide their full linguistic selves to “pass” in a society where their language was racialized and seen as lesser than.

As can be seen from these comments, pulled directly from PST writing or transcripts of conversations, these pre-service teachers conceptually believed in and supported a linguistically diverse educational environment, one that both recognizes and celebrates the unique language backgrounds of each and every student and welcomes them into the classroom (Souto-Manning & Felderman, 2013). PSTs of color who had directly experienced linguistic discrimination personally connected to the importance of such inclusion, while PSTs who identified as white communicated their lack of understanding as to why such discrimination was still present. This conceptual belief in incorporating linguistic diversity into classroom spaces was the first common theme across the data collected. PSTs’ theoretical basis for the work of incorporating translanguaging into field and student teaching experiences, then, seemed to be solid, and pointed toward the likelihood that we could move our discussion in that direction rather easily.

Activity Two: Comparison of Texts

While the first activity was meant to provide some context around the urgency of prioritizing linguistically diverse texts in classrooms, the second activity was meant to examine how language assumptions and possible biases impact our choices of children's literature and activities with young children. This examination was primarily aligned with our first research question, in that we were again uncovering our initial reactions and responses to linguistically diverse literature and discussing this in the context of the PSTs' lived experiences. In this activity, PSTs compared the language used in *Peter's Chair* (Keats, 2006) (Standardized English), *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl* (Greenfield, 1993) (Black Language), and *En Mi Familia* (Garza, 2000) (Spanish), which all have similar storylines focused on family. PSTs listened as each book was read aloud. I read the books in Standardized English and Black Language aloud, while I found an audio version of *En Mi Familia* so the PSTs could hear the language expressed fluently. It is important to note the limitations in my reading of *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl*: I was not a fluent Black Language speaker. While I practiced reading the text multiple times prior to sharing it with students, my lack of fluency in Black Language could have impacted student impressions and interpretations of the text.

Next, PSTs wrote down any associations they had when they listened to the book, from positive to negative to anything in between; these associations could be related to the *language* used in the text. After reading and independently writing, anyone who was willing shared their thoughts with the whole group, reflecting on their familiarity with the language in each text as it related to their own lived linguistic experiences, and if this impacted whether they would read the book to students. In this continuation of our third space of learning, participants worked to confront their conscious and unconscious prioritization of specific languages and dialects, as they examined and talked through their initial perceptions of each book. While a translanguaging lens calls for teachers and students to recognize the fluidity of language rather than to see languages as part of distinct and separate codes (García & Wei, 2014), this comparison was critical to us acknowledging that, while a translanguaging lens was the goal, our prior experiences in schools and beyond involved stark language separation, and we needed to first recognize this disconnect.

At the conclusion of hearing me read *Peter's Chair* (Keats, 2006) aloud, our discussion revealed that PSTs focused mostly on the *storyline* of *Peter's Chair*, making connections between the text and their familiarity with gender norms, styles of play, and egocentrism as they listened to Peter navigate the addition of a baby sibling to his family. One pre-service teacher simply said during this discussion, "I just noticed he was jealous," while another stated, "It was kind of hard to pick up on some things." It was only when I asked specifically about the language used that students began to offer other thoughts, such as: the text reflected "how we talk;" it was "correct" or "proper;" and "our families made sure we used this." Because Standardized English is the predominant linguistic code found in academic texts, discussions, and assessments, it is possible the PSTs did not initially see it as being worthy of discussion. Further, all PSTs were fluent in Standardized English, making it more likely its usage would go unnoticed. Pre-service teachers had a very different reaction to the Black Language used in *She Come Bringing*

Me That Little Baby Girl (Greenfield, 1993), which was about another young boy learning how to welcome his baby sister. Their associations, written immediately after the read aloud, included noticing how “verb tenses” were different, and the fact that this was “not Standard English.”

The conversation continued to open up when we discussed the language in the text as a class, with PSTs stating, “the grammar is different,” and “it’s not as formal; it’s more relaxed.” One PST who spoke Black Language specifically noted its use of this linguistic code, stating, “it had Black Language, but it also incorporated Standardized English, so it was code-meshing.” Their use of the term “code-meshing” referred to discussions we had engaged in around the idea that linguistic codes should not be segmented and used in isolation but rather used simultaneously in a variety of language contexts (Young et al., 2018). In comparison to translanguaging, code-meshing and translanguaging both involve the use of multiple languages/dialects while communicating; however, code-meshing focuses on a speaker’s conscious mixing of different language codes, while translanguaging views language as an integrated language system where linguistic elements seamlessly blend (Orellana & García, 2014). These associations with the text highlight PSTs’ pervasive experiences with societal linguistic norms which had communicated to them quite effectively that Standardized English was the goal. The PSTs noted that Standardized English was “more formal,” while Black Language was “more relaxed,” rather than the two simply being two equally valid language systems students could use fluidly as part of their holistic linguistic repertoire. Importantly, the two PSTs whose linguistic repertoires included Black Language also used these terms to describe the conversation in which the characters in this text engaged. Here, PSTs’ reflections make clear the hierarchies in their minds while comparing the two registers, and that these hierarchies persist regardless of their personal linguistic experiences.

Upon hearing *En Mi Familia* (Garza, 2000) read aloud by a Spanish speaker online, the pre-service teachers began by connecting initial associations to their current and future emergent bilingual students. They noted that texts like this, written in both English and Spanish, open up opportunities for emergent bilingual students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds to read the book in their multiple linguistic codes. They also stated that, upon listening to the Spanish language being read aloud, it was quite challenging to listen to all of it in Spanish and imagine what it might mean in their own language; this was most likely related to the fact that none of the PSTs were fluent in Spanish, and that only one had a close connection with someone (her fiancé) whose family spoke Spanish at home. “That was only a few minutes,” one said incredulously. “I can’t imagine that for a whole day, if I spoke Spanish but only heard English in school!” Because all PST participants grew up speaking English, their linguistic experiences did not include having to process multiple languages within academic spaces. Therefore, hearing the text read aloud in a language other than English assisted the PSTs in envisioning the challenges felt by emergent bilingual students in English-only environments, as well as the opportunities for diversifying the language used in classroom communities that value and employ a translanguaging lens. While *En Mi Familia* is a bilingual book rather than a translanguaging text, in that the Spanish and English remain separate throughout, PSTs’ engagement with the multiple languages used provided insight into their views and beliefs around literature written in diverse linguistic codes.

En Mi Familia also reminded the students of comforting, familiar places in their lives, bringing to the forefront of our discussion the power of associating language with particular places, spaces, and people, and further connecting our activities with students' prior linguistic experiences. "Sometimes hearing language can feel like a place," mused one PST. "When hearing a certain language, it takes you there." Building on this, another shared,

My fiancé, his dad's side of the family is from El Salvador. When we went there, we stayed with his grandpa, and he doesn't speak a lot of English, so we had to know enough Spanish to talk with him. So, when I hear this, it's like, I'm right back in El Salvador, trying to understand what they're saying.

Two additional PSTs, both monolingual English speakers, noted the Spanish also felt more "relaxed" than Standardized English, and "less formal."

PSTs' overall responses to these texts in Activity Two demonstrated that, while Activity One showed their theoretical beliefs that children's whole linguistic repertoires should be valued and included in classroom spaces, they were also carrying with them previous associations that Standardized English was more strongly associated with educational institutions, to the point that other language patterns were considered less formal, more relaxed, and even less proper (Baker-Bell, 2020; Hudley & Mallinson, 2010). In this extended third space of learning, where PSTs were encouraged to describe their implicit associations with particular languages and dialects in an open and dialogic environment, they were able to voice a disconnect between their theoretical values (described during Activity One) and the practice of teaching. As such, Activity Two uncovered a second theme, which was that, while PSTs intended to value and incorporate linguistic diversity into their classrooms on a theoretical level, when faced with linguistic diversity in texts, they saw Standardized English as the "proper" and "more formal" language. A deep-seated societal connection between Standardized English being viewed as *correct* and Black Language and Spanish being viewed as *lesser than* appeared in our discussions, demonstrating from a raciolinguistic perspective that language is racialized and the intersection of a user's racial and linguistic identity can serve to either empower or *disempower* them as multilingual/multidialectal speakers (Flores & Rosa, 2015). These activities, then, represented a gap between what these PSTs believed theoretically, and their ability to conceptualize these theories as pedagogical practices that pushed against the silencing of languages and dialects other than Standardized English.

Activity Three: Examination of Language in Children's Literature

After examining linguistically diverse books as a class in Activity Two, PSTs brought self-chosen examples of linguistically diverse children's literature to share with one another for use in their field and student teaching placements (Rowe, 2018). Here, we began to address our second research question, which asked PSTs to incorporate what they were learning about their own linguistic associations into their choice of diverse texts. Given that some of the PSTs' deep-seated, racialized associations with language

were uncovered in the first two activities, we found ourselves in a position to push against these implicit biases and toward a pedagogy of linguistic inclusion. Following the introduction of such books, PSTs critically examined the texts to determine how the language used either maintained or pushed against linguistic stereotypes and assumptions. They were tasked with answering the following questions: 1) Who wrote the book? Talk about their lives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds, and whether this demonstrates adequate preparation to write *this text*. 2) Does the language used reinforce or push against stereotypes? How so? 3) How/When could you use this book in your field or student teaching placements?

When they later introduced their chosen books to the whole group, the PSTs prompted themselves and their peers to intentionally consider how to incorporate linguistically diverse texts meant to prioritize the language backgrounds of their current and future students. In doing so, the PSTs took an important step toward translanguaging pedagogies, as these texts would serve as examples to students that multiple linguistic codes were valued and prioritized in their classroom (Souto-Manning & Felderman, 2013; Zapata & Laman, 2016).

It was during this time that the group of PSTs from year two of the study became interested in the work of one author, who wrote a book in Spanish about a Jewish holiday. They became fascinated by questions regarding the author's background and the experiences she had had that led her to write the text. One PST found the author's social media handle and reached out to her to find out more. When the author offered to Zoom with our group, the PSTs were able to ask her questions about the impetus for the book, and why she made those linguistic choices.

During this Zoom call, we learned the author grew up part-time in California and part-time in Mexico, with her mother's side of the family having Jewish heritage. She wrote the book to represent this background. She shared that she found herself constantly navigating two languages - English and Spanish - and never felt "American enough" while in California or "Mexican enough" while in Mexico. This tension existed in school spaces, as well, as she felt pressure to speak English in her American schools and Spanish in her Mexican schools. This feeling of not being enough linguistically, no matter where she was, and her struggle to identify fully with those around her, led to her making a conscious decision to no longer speak Spanish. It was not until her grandmother coaxed her back into practicing this linguistic part of herself that she began using Spanish again years later.

We left that call and the PSTs were eager to discuss their reactions, related to the work we were doing to embed and sustain diverse linguistic backgrounds in elementary classrooms. This is where translanguaging truly began to emerge as not just an option the PSTs thought would be responsive to students' backgrounds, but as a students' *right*. "For students from diverse cultures, if they don't see and hear their language practices," one monolingual PST said, "if they can't practice them in school, they aren't represented - then why are they here?" Another PST followed up by stating simply, "It's our job to normalize it."

At this moment in Activity Three, it was evident that PSTs reframed the word "normal." The word was no longer used in reference to Standardized English, but in

reference to the practice of *embedding* and *sustaining* diverse language practices. This, then, became a moment of realization, as PSTs grappled with the reality of someone's personal experience with linguistic discrimination, and how her school's lack of inclusion of her skills and background as an emergent bilingual student factored into her disconnect from this part of her identity. As all but two of the PST participants grew up in households that spoke Standardized English exclusively, and as the two PSTs of color were fluent in both Black Language and Standardized English, it was because of this author's personal account of the harm she had experienced at the hands of racialized linguistic practices in schools that they more deeply began to internalize the importance of acknowledging the presence of linguistic discrimination while actively pushing against it. By engaging in Freirean (2017) dialogue, where they were open to the possibility that their beliefs and understandings about language use would change, PSTs embraced a third space that pushed against binaries and "valued... uncertainty and reflection" (Solsken et al., 2000, p. 179). Their ideological beliefs began to coincide with their pedagogical practices, with theory around the importance of linguistic diversity in classrooms meeting their realization that the practical application of such beliefs must be enacted regularly.

Activity Four: Connecting the Dots

As our twelve weeks continued, we further considered our work in elementary classrooms in terms of our assumptions about language, how these assumptions impacted our children's literature and pedagogical choices, and how we could do more - do better - for our students. PSTs brainstormed pedagogical practices they could employ to encourage translanguaging in their students' writing and speaking, therefore directly addressing our second research question regarding the prioritization of such texts and activities. We used as inspiration the research of Zoeller and Briceño (2023), co-creating a graphic similar to their own work (see Figure 1 for our version), where the PSTs identified pedagogical shifts they would incorporate to create linguistically safe spaces for all students. Together, we considered how our work was guiding us to co-create spaces where students both *developed knowledge* about language and *applied cross-linguistic practices* to literacy learning. This intentional third space bridge from *theory* to *practice* was intended to support PSTs in the realization that translanguaging is not simply a pedagogical construct discussed in university teacher preparation programs, but a set of practices that can be implemented strategically in the context of linguistically rich classroom environments (Zenkov & Pytash, 2022).

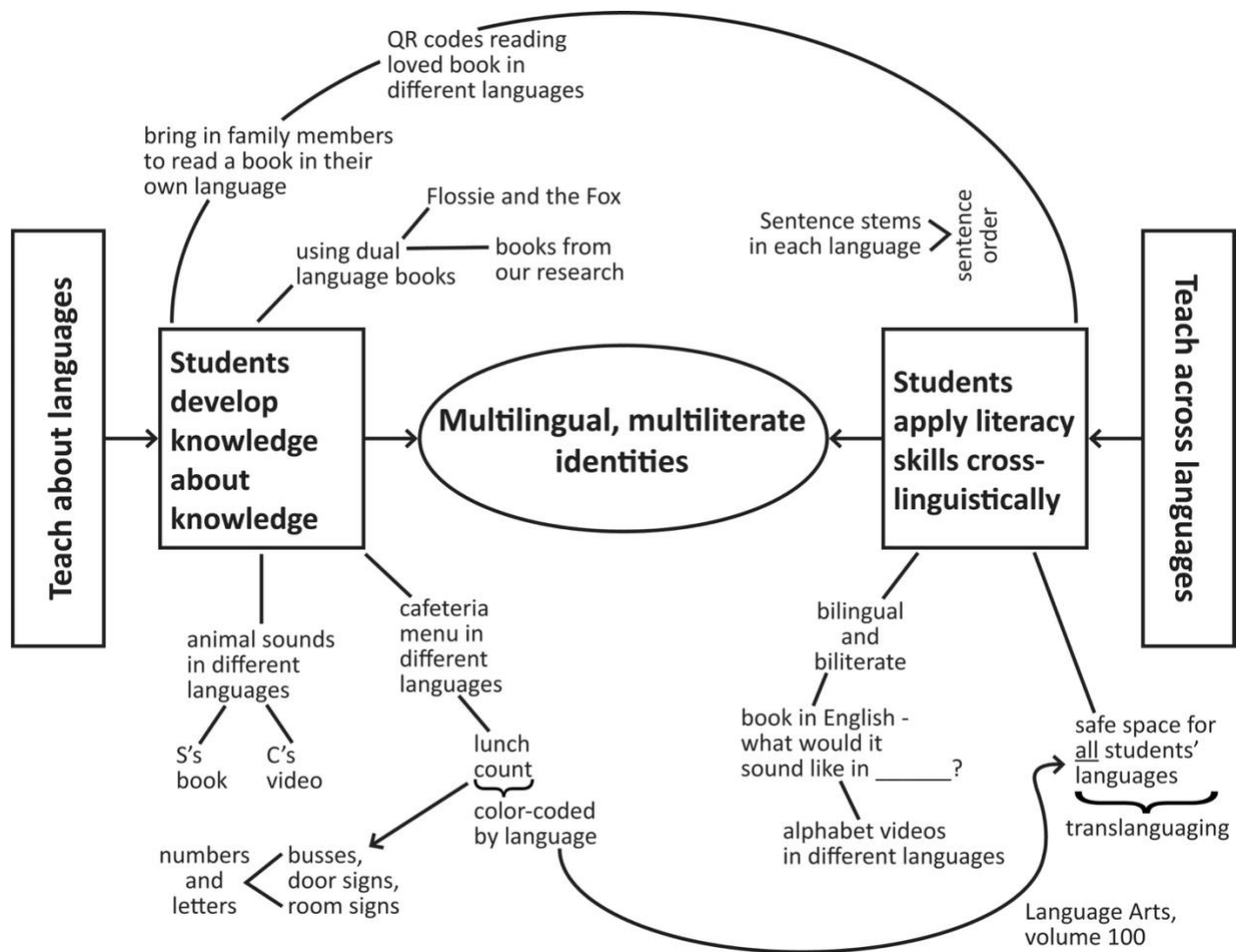


Figure 1
Pedagogical Practices with Translanguaging Lens

As they created their graphic, the PSTs focused on the importance of creating linguistically safe spaces with students, where emergent bilinguals would feel free to bring their entire linguistic selves to the table. They discussed how opportunities to demonstrate multilingual expertise could extend into not just speaking, but also writing, with students creating books that incorporated multiple linguistic codes. Further, they envisioned a classroom space in which the materials on the walls and in charts reflected the language backgrounds of all students, as a way to both increase emergent bilinguals' feelings of belonging in the space and to support *all* learners in experimenting with and using words from multiple languages in their writing and speaking (Zoeller & Briceño, 2023).

When asked to jot down notes regarding their specific plans for these classroom incorporations of linguistic diversity, PSTs responded enthusiastically. One Standardized English speaker stated, "I can make sure ALL of my students are seeing and hearing themselves in literature, in lessons, in activities, videos, all different applications in the

classroom.” “I can reinforce that unique = awesome,” wrote one Black Language/Standardized English-speaking PST, adding, “I will plan lessons about historical figures from many cultures and who speak many languages.”

Reflecting deeply on her own background and lived linguistic experiences, a Standardized English-speaking PST shared, “I think being aware and continuing to become aware of the potentially biased things I have been socialized into, will be mirrored in my teaching. The further I unlearn these things and learn to appreciate and understand different language backgrounds, the more just, fair, and beneficial teaching I can provide.”

PSTs’ commitment to specific translanguaging practices in Activity Four demonstrated a thematic shift away from their tendency to validate Standardized English in Activity Two, and further acknowledged that, in Activity Three, they experienced a change in mindset toward feeling responsible for incorporating a translanguaging lens into their classroom spaces. Here, the linguistically inclusive mindsets and theoretical beliefs they demonstrated in Activity One were finally in alignment with their pedagogical practices. Through valuing and prioritizing the intentional incorporation of a third space of learning, PSTs realized “the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152).

Discussion and Implications

As demonstrated by the findings, pre-service teachers actively pushed against power structures when discussing the scholarly literature in Activity One, but while analyzing language used in children’s books in Activity Two, the associations they made often prioritized Standardized English as just that - the standard. “Normal” or “formal” was used multiple times to describe Standardized English, while “relaxed” was used to describe Black Language and Spanish. From a raciolinguistic perspective, “where standard language ideology dictates that only one version or variety of English is held up as *the* standard” (Ahmed et al., 2024), these PSTs fell back into the relatively common narrative that one language or dialect was somehow more rule-governed than or superior to others. If these assumptions and associations are not problematized in university teacher preparation programs, possibly through sustained work in the third space, they may go unnoticed. Given that these underlying assumptions only emerged upon deeper examination of language used in children’s literature, they could directly impact PSTs’ view of their students’ abilities and their incorporation of a translanguaging lens if left unexamined. As the work of Baker-Bell (2020) and others has made clear, it is these underlying assumptions - those beliefs that language is not racialized but neutral - that prevent educators from having deep and impactful conversations about the impact of linguistic racism on multilingual/multidialectal learners.

It was only after personally interacting with an author whose diverse language background was not validated in school that the PSTs focused on more concretely pushing against the powerful policies and practices inherent in the propping up of Standardized English. This shift occurred both in discussion and by committing to language-rich pedagogical practices. In Activity Three, PSTs framed “normal” not as the

use of Standardized English, but as diversity of language practice. Then, in Activity Four, they created graphic organizers and personal lists of specific translanguaging practices they committed to employing in their own classroom spaces. This shift could make a significant difference in PSTs' perception of linguistically diverse students' abilities and the incorporation of their multiple linguistic codes into the classroom. Additionally, as this process connected the theory and research on linguistic diversity and translanguaging with concrete pedagogical practices, it demonstrates the effectiveness of creating and sustaining a third space to address the challenge identified in the literature regarding the disconnections PSTs often feel between the two (Zeichner, 2010; Zenkov & Pytash, 2022).

Therefore, while this study is limited in its sample size and scope, the data gathered through anecdotal notes, pre-service teacher writing, and transcripts from conversations demonstrate promising results regarding the power of third space learning focused on uncovering and examining linguistic associations and biases to deepen and shift PSTs' teaching practices toward a translanguaging lens. Further work will be done to follow up with these PSTs as they begin their teaching careers, to determine which practices they choose to employ, and whether this work will impact their pedagogical choices long term.

These findings, however, point to the critical importance of pre-service teacher preparation programs dedicating sustained opportunities for PSTs to engage the intersection of theory and practice once they begin and as they continue their field and student teaching experiences. As the data made clear, PSTs' initial thoughts about using linguistically diverse texts and incorporating multiple languages and dialects into classrooms pointed to their strong beliefs that such diversity should be prioritized. It was only once these theoretical beliefs collided with what it means to concretely uphold them in classroom practice that racialized views of language emerged. Additional exposure to and work with diverse language users and multilingual/multidialectal texts was necessary for the PSTs to match their pedagogical practices with their overarching beliefs about the value of empowering linguistic diversity in their current and future classrooms.

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