Translanguaging in the Leadership Classroom: Fostering an Inclusive Community of Sociocultural Discovery

Michaela C. Parisi, Ph.D.
Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE) Public Policy Fellow
Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center
Saint Louis University
Saint Louis, MO

Abstract

This heuristic case study explored the experiences of multilingual and monolingual students in a translanguaging leadership classroom in a midwestern United States public school. Data were collected by the teacher-researcher using documents, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. Employing a theoretical framework of translanguaging pedagogy, sociocultural theory, and theories of belonging, the results of this study demonstrate the utility of translanguaging pedagogy in creating a safe classroom environment in which students are able to develop sociocultural awareness. The study demonstrated the possibilities for translanguaging as a strategy for strengthening cross-cultural connections and multilingual collaboration.

Keywords: translanguaging, multilingual learners, sociocultural awareness, cross-cultural collaboration, belonging

Introduction

Since the 1980s, there has been a surge of linguistic diversity brought about by global migration caused by economic pressures, environmental stress, and advancements in technology (Hofmann et al., 2020). During a span of forty years, the number of United States residents who spoke a language other than English at home grew by 194% from 23.1 million in 1980 to 67.8 million in 2019 (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). Because of this, schools are more and more likely to be educating classrooms of linguistically diverse students. In 2019, 10.4% of all students enrolled in United States schools were identified as English language learners, and 22.6% students spoke a language other than English at home (NCES, 2022). This rise in linguistic diversity has brought about intense discussion about how to best meet the needs of multilingual students in traditionally monolingual classrooms.

While bilingual schools were prominent in the territory now known as the United States during the 17th and 18th centuries, since the mid-1800s, monolingual ideologies have shaped the landscape of the United States education system and reinforced English hegemony (Cavanaugh, 1996; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; García Garrido & Fernández Álvarez, 2011). In the 1860s, the United States adopted a policy of assimilation, and by 1923, 34 states had passed English-only education laws (García Garrido & Fernández Álvarez, 2011; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017). English-only policies were predominant until the mid-20th century, when the federal government revised the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to establish funding for schools to provide bilingual education for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (De Costa & Qin, 2015; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; Linton, 2006). The subsequent court cases of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) and *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) furthered the requirements for affirmative steps that schools must take to provide English language learner students with access to the same curriculum as English-speaking students, but did not specify what approaches schools might use.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of bilingual education programs (e.g. Collier, 1992; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lucas & Katz, 1994); however, such programs are still relatively rare (Roberts, 2021). In search of other, more practical strategies for integrating and honoring students' multiple languages, some teachers have turned to translanguaging. The term translanguaging was first used by Cen Williams (1994, 1996) to refer to the practice of teachers encouraging students to alternate between their known languages for receptive or productive use. Translanguaging pedagogy now refers to the intentional strategies through which teachers encourage students to make meaning of their learning with the entirety of their linguistic repertoire (Williams, 2012, as cited in García & Wei, 2014). Through translanguaging pedagogy (TP) teachers and students convey ideas in multiple languages and encourage cross-linguistic transfer.

Studies have illustrated the effectiveness of employing translanguaging in classrooms for both engaging multilingual (ML) students and improving their academic achievement (Aoyama, 2020; Karlsson et al., 2018; Tai & Wei, 2021; Zhang & Jocuns, 2021; Zhang-Wu, 2021). However, prior studies have focused on the academic experiences of ML students in translanguaging classrooms and have not examined the sociocultural implications for both monolingual and multilingual students. Given that the United States education system and its policies uphold English hegemony and that the majority of United States students are monolingual English

speakers, it is crucial to examine how strategies such as translanguaging affect the experiences of both multilingual and monolingual students within United States classroom settings.

Acknowledging the socially, culturally, and politically contextualized nature of students' educational realities, this study employs a heuristic inquiry case study approach to investigate the experiences of students in a translanguaging English Medium Instruction (EMI) Civic Leadership classroom in a Midwestern United States public high school. Two main questions were pursued: 1) How do students feel about the use of translanguaging in an EMI Civic Leadership class? and 2) How do students perceive their experiences in a translanguaging EMI Civic Leadership classroom? In answering these questions, I seek to illuminate the sociocultural and emotional effects of TP on students within traditionally monolingual classrooms.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
Translanguaging Pedagogy

According to translanguaging researchers and theorists, García and Wei (2014), translanguaging is a process of critical co-construction of knowledge through the use of multiple languages that encourages multifaceted understanding. Through translanguaging, one is able to articulate and make sense of lived experiences and situate oneself amongst multiple sociocultural worlds by integrating the entirety of one's linguistic funds of knowledge (Kenner & Gregory, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Based on this understanding of multilingualism, the objective of translanguaging pedagogy is for teachers to use students' native language(s) to reinforce the language of instruction and vice versa in order to increase the students' participation and understanding of content (García & Wei, 2014; Williams, 2002).

In a 2020 article, García demonstrated how content classroom teachers might use TP to enhance ML students' comprehension. The study found that by providing an ML student with texts in her native language as well as English, the student was better able to comprehend and engage with course content (García, 2020). Several other studies have similarly demonstrated that translanguaging may empower students to be creative with their ways of interpreting, conceptualizing, and interacting with their realities through integrating diverse funds of knowledge (Karlsson et al., 2019; Ollerehead, 2019; Pacheco & Miller, 2016; Tai & Wei, 2021; Zhang-Wu, 2022). These studies reported that by calling upon information from various funds of knowledge through translanguaging ML, students improved their learning and academic performance.

Because TP allows ML students to access and call upon funds of knowledge from their multiple languages, not only do students understand academic content better, but they are also advantageously equipped to interact in their social classroom settings (Flynn et al., 2021; Song et al., 2022). Song et al. (2022) found that translanguaging created a space in which ML students felt more confident collaborating with their teacher and peers. Flynn et al. (2021) had similar findings in their investigation of two educators who used translanguaging to encourage a preschooler's development of storytelling over the course of a year. Through translanguaging storytelling, the ML student increased his peer-to-peer and peer-to-teacher interactions (Flynn et al., 2021). These findings imply that translanguaging is useful in bolstering ML students' social interactions in addition to enhancing students' understanding of academic content.

Translanguaging pedagogy served as the foundation for this study's design. Based on prior research, this study assumes that TP allows ML students to access their diverse funds of knowledge, which may differ from the dominant culture of United States schools.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT), often associated with psychologist Lev Vygotsky, in education is the theory that learning takes place when students are invited to co-construct and negotiate knowledge through social processes (Kozulin, 2003). When students interact with the intent of constructing meaning, they are learning about and through each other and building a shared understanding. According to SCT, learning is a social process and reflects the cultures of those involved in the transmission of ideas (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In a translanguaging context, students use verbal, written, and physical communication to transmit and formulate meaning that has cultural significance. The interactions that take place between students involve the exchange and establishment of novel funds of knowledge from which students can draw.

As a result of negotiation of meaning between members of a given culture, participants attend to the meanings assigned to particular actions, speech, and events through the lens of the culture within which the meaning was constructed (Lantoff, 1994). Within the school context, students' sociocultural backgrounds contribute to students' resources, experiences, and access to opportunities. The United States educational context, built on Anglo-Saxon views and ideals, is overwhelmingly White, Eurocentric, and monolingual, and does not structurally represent or acknowledge the value of non-dominant groups (Howard, 2016; Huber, 2009). This is of concern for students who have a different sociocultural frame of reference and might not have a sufficient understanding of the context in which the knowledge they are being taught in schools was constructed.

However, research suggests that by engaging in interaction with dominant culture peers, non-dominant culture students might be better able to understand classroom content (Martin-Beltran et al., 2017; Kim & Lee, 2012). Findings suggest that students and teachers used translanguaging to engage one another in co-construction and recognize funds of knowledge (Martin-Beltran et al., 2017). Because the teacher facilitated cultural exchange that capitalized on students' linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge, students felt respected and were willing to engage in classroom communication and activities through which they learned from one another and the teacher (Kim & Lee, 2012). These peer-to-peer and peer-to-teacher interactions aided in ML students' negotiation of their learning of their non-native language and culture. Sociocultural theory informed both the design of this study and the analysis of data.

Using SCT as a framework, this study assumed that learning happens through negotiating meaning in social interaction and that these interactions involve cultural transmission. I thus viewed communication in the classroom as a form of cultural transmission that informed the results of this study.

Theories of Belonging

According to Hodgins, "Belonging (noun) is a…dynamic psychological and physiological phenomenon experienced when one's need to belong is satisfied by positive acceptance of and in identities relating to self-concept, social groups, and one's space" (2016, slide 21). Social scientists have long used theories of belonging to interpret how and where self-concept and collective identities meet. The term belonging allows researchers to

formulate understanding about the flexible and constructed nature of identity within social contexts, for it is within spaces of belonging that individual identities are conflicted, affirmed, and negotiated (Delanty et al., 2011).

In order to understand the concept of belonging, it is important to know how relationships of belonging form. According to Delanty et al., connections of belonging emerge from complex interactions contextualized by cultural and historical conditions and progress over time through "processes of problem resolution and search for social compromises" (2011, p. 21). By these terms, belonging is not a set characteristic but rather a process of negotiating and situating oneself in a larger social context. This also implies that there are varying levels of belongingness and that these levels can change over time as historical, social, and environmental contexts evolve (Hodgins, 2016). Examining these contexts and relationships can help in understanding students' perceptions of belonging within educational spaces. Within this study, theories of belonging served as a framework for understanding communication within the Civic Leadership classroom. Examining students' interactions from a framework of belonging aided in contextualizing how students' identities and the classroom's collective identity interrelated.

Methods

In order to develop a thick description (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of the lived experiences of students within the Civic Leadership EMI translanguaging classroom, this study employed a heuristic inquiry case study design.

Context

The setting for this research was a classroom in a suburban-rural high school just outside a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States. To protect the privacy of participants, I have given a pseudonym, Dearborn, to the school and district. Dearborn High School is the only high school in the Dearborn School District. In 2022, the district served just over 4,200 students, 5.72% of whom were classified by the state as English Language Learners. Of the 1,400 students at Dearborn High School, 64.6% are White, 17.5% are Hispanic, 9.4% are Black, and 7% are mixed race.

The town within which the Dearborn School District is located has seen a great deal of change over the past 30 years. Before 1994, the town was home to an air force base, which provided jobs for many in the area. When the base closed, the demographics and economy of the town shifted. As urban sprawl from the nearby metropolitan city began to reach the town, the number of Black and Hispanic residents increased and began to occupy the manufacturing and retail jobs, which had begun to employ the majority of residents. What was once a relatively racially and politically homogeneous town became a community of budding diversity to which the school district needed to respond.

It is also important to consider the political context of the town as political ideologies shape the way in which community members, including students and teachers, perceive and interact with one another (Adaval & Wyer, 2022). In the 2020 general election, 61.13% of voters in Dearborn voted for the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, and 38.86% voted for the Democratic candidate, Joseph Biden (Election Summary Report, 2020). Although President Trump may have some diverging ideologies from the general Republican Party, historically, the Republican Party has advocated for legislation mandating English-only education. It is also important to mention President Trump's attitude and disposition towards the use of languages

other than English in the United States. While many of former President Trump's family members are multilingual, he is not, and during his 2016 campaign, Trump openly criticized another party member for speaking Spanish. Trump said, "he should really set the example by speaking English while in the United States" (Scott, 2015, para. 2). When asked about this remark by a reporter during a presidential debate, Trump responded, "this is a country where we speak English, not Spanish" (CNN, 2015,0.36). As the Dearborn community has seen an increase in its Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population over recent years, this is a crucial fact for understanding this demographic's experience in the town and schools.

Participants

Purposeful sampling is used to "select groups or participants with whom you can establish the most productive relationships, ones that will best enable you to answer your research questions" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 99). The classroom setting, my own classroom, was purposefully selected because of its use of translanguaging pedagogy by me, a multilingual teacher, as well as the linguistic diversity of the students. The six participants who were interviewed were members of the class whose parents gave informed consent for their child to share their classroom stories. See Table 1 for a description of their linguistic characteristics.

Table 1

List of Interview Participants with Linguistic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Linguistic Background	Primary Language	Other Language(s)
Evalynn	Multilingual	English	Spanish
Bella	Monolingual	English	N/A
Alicia	Multilingual	Spanish	English
Justice	Multilingual	English	Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, & Mambwe
Jane	Multilingual	English	American Sign Language
Ashley	Monolingual	English	N/A

Participants were students enrolled in my Introduction to Civic Leadership course—a one-semester elective course that is required for students enrolled in the school's Public Service Career Path. Designed to introduce students to the characteristics and skills necessary for a career in civic leadership, the class met for 90 minutes every other day. Upon completion of the course, students were able to enroll in Civic Leadership II, where they applied the skills learned in the introduction course to their local context through community-integrated projects. Four of the participating students enrolled in Civic Leadership II with me the semester following their completion of Introduction to Civic Leadership.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers reject the positivist view of the researcher's role as an objective observer "in favor of one that recognizes the influences of the researcher's own status (e.g., race, gender, etc.) on the shaping of knowledge" (Mertens, 2019, p. 275). By acknowledging factors which have shaped my worldview, I reveal my

ontological and epistemological assumptions I carry as a teacher-researcher. One of the major components of my worldview that influences this research is my own history with multilingualism and education.

I am a White, middle-class female with a native language of English who grew up in a Midwestern United States metropolitan area. When I was in fourth grade, I began formal instruction in French with encouragement from my parents, who both have some proficiency in other languages. I continued to study French throughout public high school and eventually majored in French during my undergraduate studies while taking Spanish classes along the way. Unlike many multilingual students in today's schools, I had a choice in learning another language and did not have to do so to access schooling. I was never ostracized for the language I spoke. My family valued multilingualism and encouraged me to learn foreign languages, which has affected how I view the role of language within the United States society.

For three years, I served as a French teacher in a suburban-rural Midwestern school of predominantly White, English-speaking students before transitioning to teach gifted education and leadership at Dearborn High School. As a teacher who uses translanguaging pedagogy in my own English Medium Instruction classroom, I share a similar experience to that of the study participants. This relatedness of experience not only lent itself to the heuristic tradition but also shaped the goals and design of the study, as the researcher's own background, experiences, and goals play a role in the research design as well as the validity of findings (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Through the process of reflexivity, I, as the researcher, situated myself within the cultural and social context that shaped the design of this study as well as data collection and analysis (Darwin Holmes, 2020). While my positionality may shift over time with the course of changing contexts, as Darwin Holmes (2020) indicated, by engaging in critical reflexivity throughout the entire research process, I continually articulated my positionality by keeping a journal.

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were utilized, including a review of students' personal documents, field notes from observations in the class setting, and semi-structured interviews. As suggested by Ellingson (2009), by "interweaving, blending, or otherwise drawing upon more than one genre of data" (p.11), I created a crystallized, multifaceted understanding of the phenomena. Each data source provided rich, descriptive information that was used to inductively derive codes and themes that aid in understanding the phenomenon.

The preliminary data source was the course evaluation students submitted at the end of their semester-long Civic Leadership course. In their evaluation, students were asked to reflect and give feedback with the goal of informing the teacher about what instructional strategies and activities went well and which may need to be reformed in subsequent semesters. A total of 26 student responses were compiled and analyzed. This document provided me with insight into participants' selective language usage to describe their experiences, which was crucial to this study's emic approach (Patton, 2015). The results from the preliminary analysis of this document were used in the development of the protocol for the semi-structured interviews (See Appendix).

As a teacher-researcher investigating my own classroom, I engaged as a participant-observer in the study setting. Over the course of one week, I recorded

video observations, which I watched back to transcribe interactions and develop detailed field notes. Using video observations aided in bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), my teacher self as I was able to inspect students' peer interactions that I had been unable to observe while teaching. These observations provided crucial data for understanding how social interactions take place between students in the translanguaging EMI Civic Leadership classroom.

The final sources of data were semi-structured interviews and follow-up member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To mitigate unequal teacher-student power dynamics, all interviews occurred the semester following participants' enrollment in Introduction to Civic Leadership after grades had been awarded. Each interview took place in English in a conference room in Dearborn High School. Afterwards, each interview was transcribed, and a Microsoft Word document of the transcription was sent to each participant to review for accuracy. During a follow-up member check, participants were able "to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences" (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1802). At this point, participants provided clarification and further explication of their previous responses, which provided me with a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data collected, I used both enumerative content analysis (Miles et al., 2020) and thematic analysis (Grbich, 2013). I began this process by reading and rereading the documents, interview transcripts, and descriptive and reflexive field notes. As I immersed myself in the data, I noted recurrent and emergent ideas, many of which became descriptive codes.

Next, I embarked on the process of line-by-line coding of the data sources and assigning descriptive codes (Miles et al., 2020) using the software QualCoder. After the creation of preliminary codes, I used an inductive process to group the descriptive codes by meaning into interpretive codes, also called "pattern codes" (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2020). Finally, I grouped interpretive codes into themes that describe the abstract, subtle, or tacit concepts and processes identified through the coding process (Grbich, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). In the following section, I detail the results of my analysis and connect the thematic concepts to relevant literature.

Findings

The data analysis revealed that students generally have a positive regard for the use of TP. In general, translanguaging resulted in perceptions of both safety and discomfort within the Civic Leadership classroom. Additionally, findings indicate that students experienced a growth in awareness of self and diversity as a result of their experiences. More specifically, in answering the research questions, the following themes emerged: 1) Safety and Discomfort and 2) Developing Awareness.

Safety and Discomfort

In addressing the first research question about how students feel about the use of translanguaging in the Civic Leadership classroom, analysis revealed that students perceived the classroom as both safe and uncomfortable at times. The metaphor of a "safe" classroom in this context does not refer to physical safety but rather a classroom "in which students are able to openly express their individuality, even if it differs dramatically from the norms set by the instructor, the profession, or other students" (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p. 50). For students, a "safe" classroom environment is foundational to their interactions with their teacher and peers as well as academic content (Sayfulloevna, 2023).

In the course evaluations, students expressed their feelings of safety in a variety of ways; one student wrote, "[My favorite part of class is] being able to express myself freely without worry of judgment." Across data sources, it was apparent that I, as a teacher, played a foundational role in fostering students' perception of safety. One student's response to the question "Any last word for the teacher? (not required)", illuminated this as a factor of students' perceived safety, stating, "I really appreciate how it seems like you're really interested in everything that everybody says in your class, and anybody can have a conversation with you about anything and you'll listen." In general, students saw the teacher as someone willing to listen, which led the students to be more open in their self-expression.

For ML students, their perception of me as a teacher who is willing to listen, coupled with my own multilingual identity, aided in creating a sense of safety and acceptance. Alicia revealed this in her interview saying:

> With you when I didn't know a word in English, you would say, 'Just say to me in Spanish, I'll try my best,' and that just made me feel wanted in your classroom, made me feel more respected for who I am. And it just made me feel so much better.

Alicia pointed to a specific action I, as the teacher, took that made her feel welcome to express herself and her identity. Another Spanish-speaking student shared a similar attitude on the course evaluation, saying, "también fue bonito hablar con ella en español porque mi ingles no sirve, y tambien me gusto que se diera el tiempo de traducirme demasiadas cosas acerca de la clase" ["It was also nice to talk to her in Spanish because my English is useless, and I also liked that she took time to translate too many things about the class for me."] Both

students viewed me as the teacher as being supportive of their multilingual identities, as I encouraged their use of Spanish in meaning-making, making my role of teacher crucial to their feelings of safety.

Because ML students felt included and accepted in the classroom, they felt comfortable sharing more about themselves. In her interview, Bella expressed this idea by stating,

> We had [a foreign exchange student] in our class that I feel like I saw him give out so much more of himself in this class than I have seen him anywhere else because he was able to learn English, but like the things he didn't know how to say he was able to say in Italian.

The stories Bella and others told in their evaluation showed that because students felt their linguistic identity was respected by their teacher and peers, they trusted each other enough to share ideas and opinions as well as other aspects of their identities, a finding similar to the results of Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) and Holley and Steiner (2005).

Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) found that classroom environments that students describe as "safe spaces" often center around group activity, as the collaborative environment fosters a sense of safety. Throughout the data sources, it was clear that the structure and organization of the classroom environment were designed to facilitate collaboration. In terms of the physical environment, students sat at tables of two to four, with students facing each other, which facilitated ease of communication and collaboration between students. Furthermore, classroom assignments and activities required students to collaborate. For example, one ML student mentioned in her evaluation that her favorite activity was a project where students worked together to identify their views of leadership

and design a poster that synthesized their beliefs of what a good leader looks like. Activities such as this provided students opportunities to communicate and develop a shared understanding, which led to a sense of safety.

In the majority of evaluations, students named group activities and projects as their favorite class assignments. One student's evaluation specifically drew attention to the fact that collaboration with peers aided in overcoming personal feelings of anxiety, which allowed him to establish connections with others.

> Having different activities and assignments that required interacting with my classmates was extremely helpful in getting to know the other people in class and overcoming my anxiety. I've been able to meet a lot of people through the different group projects that I might not have been able to meet otherwise.

As this student noted, collaboration was foundational to initiating connections between students. As students collaborated, they developed relationships with one another, which allowed them to feel safe to participate and take risks (Clapper, 2010). One of the risks that some students took was that of cross-linguistic collaboration.

As a teacher, I used TP to structure opportunities for cross-linguistic collaboration. These actions did not go unnoticed, as Alicia, in her interview stated,

> I feel like you just put stuff around the classroom to help students talk to each other if they don't know the language, then you encourage them to speak. You also encourage the English speakers to speak to that person to just make them feel included.

Alicia summarized what other ML students had noted in their class evaluations--that by involving students' known languages, they were better able to participate in class and feel a sense of belonging that fostered connections with others.

In her interview, Jane also drew attention to how a translanguaging resource opened doors for students to engage in multilingual communication, as she told a story about how she developed a connection with a student with limited English proficiency:

> I just felt like we all connected on a different level because we just tried to talk to each other. We made an effort… I know [Lexie] and I at one time we just stood and we stared at your poster on the wall with all your Spanish phrases and we figured out, you know, one maybe a week that we could say and that we could communicate in some way. And I know [Marianna] was focusing on learning English, so it was both ways which was really helpful.

Rather than collaborating with other English-speaking students, Jane and her classmates went out of their way to use the translanguaging resources provided to communicate with Marianna. Although students may not have shared the same language, they attempted to cross linguistic barriers to create collaborative projects that reflected multiple positionalities.

While student evaluations and interviews identified feelings of safety as leading to better communication, cross-linguistic communication also resulted in feelings of discomfort for some. When asked about her usage of multiple languages in class, Evalynn said, "I prefer English because spoken English is easier, and I know some words can get lost in translation and you can get confused between the languages." Although she spoke Spanish, Evalynn felt that it was better to use her primary language, English, because of the discomfort that miscommunication creates.

When Justice was asked the same question, she had a similar response, stating, "Most of the time it's because no one can understand me… that's kind of what stops me from using my language, you know? But sometimes I don't stop using the language and everyone's like, 'What did you say?'" As Evalynn and Justice expressed, the fear of misunderstanding was present in the Civic Leadership classroom and was one factor in ML students' decision to use or not use their multiple languages. Although both students explicitly stated a positive view of the use of TP and acknowledged the benefits it provided, their use of translanguaging was limited because they felt they might not be understood.

It is worth noting that a great deal of discomfort identified by both multilingual and monolingual students was related to issues of cultural and linguistic differences. Six students expressed feelings of discomfort and cited communication with the possibility of being misunderstood as the impetus for malaise. For example, one student's evaluation listed "Having to communicate with different groups of people we don't really know," as his least favorite part of class. In several evaluations and interviews, students expressed feeling self-conscious or nervous to collaborate with peers who were different from themselves. While there were occasional references to specific activities that caused discomfort, the majority of these were partner or group partner activities, and only two mentioned individual activities. Because students were frequently asked to collaborate with diverse peers with whom they may not have prior relationships, there was a possibility for miscommunication (Wierzbicka, 2010).

Across the three data sources, the descriptive code "miscommunication" was identified 24 times, demonstrating that students' anxiety about miscommunication is not unfounded. However, the code "frustration/miscommunication" was only present on three occasions, implying that although miscommunication occurred, it was also resolved. Several students expressed how they navigated moments of confusion, and an excerpt from Justice's interview provides a typical example of how students navigated moments of confusion:

> I would try and use Google Translate [but sometimes] it just wouldn't go through or it wouldn't go in and [Marianna would] want to say something, but she kind of didn't know how so she kept quiet, [so] I would use a lot of hand gestures and like show her pictures kind of. That's one thing I would do.

Although Justice and others frequently cited Google Translate as their primary method for cross-linguistic communication, using pictures, gestures, and simplified English were also strategies that were named. In her interview, Ashley also mentioned how she negotiated conversations with her non-native English-speaking peers:

> [S]ometimes I would try to use basic English words because you know if I said something that maybe another English speaker might not even know then of course [they are] probably not going to know it. I feel like that happens a lot in other classrooms.

Ashley and other students were cognizant of the possibility of miscommunication because they had seen it happen in other classrooms. However, while there was discomfort surrounding miscommunication, students were able to identify strategies for resolving misunderstandings.

Because the Civic Leadership class was a highly communicative and collaborative space where students felt safe and accepted, students were willing to take social risks. Although these risks occasionally resulted in discomfort from

miscommunication, students were able to identify strategies for overcoming misunderstanding. My modeling of multilingual communication encouraged students to do the same. This led to multilingual students' feelings of support for their linguistic identities. The combination of these factors led to students forming connections with linguistically diverse peers, which opened doors for students to learn more about one another and develop sociocultural awareness.

Developing Sociocultural Awareness

When answering the second research question, analysis showed that students recognized their experiences in the translanguaging Civic Leadership classroom as developing awareness of self and others. Self-awareness in this context refers to students' consciousness of their own frame of reference, including their characteristics, feelings, and experiences, while awareness of others refers to the students' consciousness of how others' frames of reference differ from their own. In this section, I highlight the interviews of Bella and Ashley, as these monolingual students clearly expressed a change in awareness that was implied but not explicitly stated in the interviews with the multilingual students.

One of the ways in which students increase their awareness of self and others is through participating in activities that make their frame of reference detectable (Hakelind et al., 2020), which the Civic Leadership class did by encouraging students to investigate their own cultures and values in group or class discussions. Bella, in her interview, indicated an increase in self-awareness when she acknowledged that her perspective of multilingualism had changed due to the use of translanguaging in the Civic Leadership class.

> Up until that point I definitely felt like it was not really a big deal, me only knowing English, but then, like,

seeing and hearing that *pauses* and I guess just wanting to be part of something bigger than just English-- knowing more, having more culture I guess.

Bender and colleagues (2010) in their study of self-awareness in culturally-responsive social work found that when students increased their self-awareness, they also became more aware of their role in the struggles they may face when developing trusting relationships with those who had dissimilar backgrounds from their own. My interview with Bella suggests the same. In answering a follow-up question, Bella recognized her monolingual identity as a limiting factor in her connections to others, saying,

> If I knew more languages than just English off the top of my head I wouldn't have to go through the work of using a translator and hoping it's accurate or having someone try to communicate for me when I want to have that conversation with them.

Rather than place blame on a non-English speaker for not speaking English, a common reaction in America, Bella accepts her role in two-way communication with diverse others. As Bella increased her self-awareness, she also became more cognizant of the diversity that existed within our class.

In the class evaluations, comments such as the following also demonstrated students' growth in awareness of diversity:

> My favorite part of this class was the conversations, because it gave me a sort of look at the sort of differences in ways we would react to situations we were given. Which truly showed how unique we all were.

While some students merely became aware of differences, Justice expressed how increased awareness of her linguistically diverse peers prompted her to learn about other languages and cultures. After

mentioning the visibility of the Spanish-speaking ML students in the class, Justice stated,

> I would go home and research different things so I could come to class and be like, 'Hey, I can speak a little bit of Spanish' … Like I learned more about different cultures instead of just one culture compared to other classes.

Although Justice may not have become proficient in Spanish, her interactions with linguistically diverse peers within the classroom led to her exploration of their language and culture. This was a notable thread across the data, as there were 26 instances of participants expressing curiosity about the culture of diverse classmates.

In addition to being curious about the diverse backgrounds of their peers, participants demonstrated that they were aware of their classmates' origins and backgrounds because of in-class collaboration. Jane discussed this in our interview, commenting:

> [I]n an English-only classroom, you're really going to focus on the people you know, the people that speak the same language as you or that you've communicated with before. But if you have something different, with different languages in a classroom, I would definitely say that you're more motivated to talk to people because you see that example every day, so you're more motivated to talk to different people and see what their aspects are… I've lived in [Dearborn] my whole life, but lots of people haven't, and we had a very mixed culture classroom. [Marianna] was from Mexico… [Lexie] moved from the South and [Justice] moved from Africa and we had, you know, very mixed cultures and different

ideas that collaborated on a pretty good basis.

This statement illustrates how students in the Civic Leadership class were willing to discuss the diversity that existed in the classroom, and across all six interviews, this idea was mentioned 14 times.

As students developed awareness of self and others, they simultaneously developed their sociocultural awareness. Sociocultural awareness refers to students' consciousness of social norms, cultural expectations, and how they relate to the experience of others (Johnson, 2009). This was evident in the data as students described how their experiences differed from those of their peers and what those differences might mean. Perhaps the most apparent realization students had was of the privileged place of English in schools (17 instances). Participants discussed how their interactions with ML students prompted them to consider how the English language shaped the experiences of ML students. When referring to how her perspective of ML students' experiences had changed, Ashley said,

> [T]hinking about it, I don't know how hard it is for [Marianna] to like, be in school and not understand anyone around her. Like I wouldn't... I don't even know... I couldn't even imagine it. You want to speak a language that I understand. Like that's honestly probably scary. I'd be scared.

Ashley recognized that having knowledge of the dominant language was a question of access to school as a whole, but especially to social interactions. She also acknowledged that if she did not have proficiency in English, she would experience her world in a different way.

Bella shared a similar thought about the role of the English language in schools. She said,

I mean, like I have a lot of friends who don't know a lot of English. Like they know enough to get their points across, but not enough to where they feel like they can usually get the help and have the opportunities other kids have in your regular English class have, but then you have a class that's more inclusive and it shows. I feel like it makes them feel more safe and vulnerable and just seen.

In this instance, Bella was comparing her English-only classes and the translanguaging Civic Leadership class, and she acknowledges the role English plays in accessing opportunities in school. While Bella herself identifies as monolingual, she views translanguaging as a valuable practice that provides a more equitable environment within which diversity is appreciated. All six interview participants expressed this view, demonstrating their awareness that societal norms such as the lingua franca can greatly affect people's experiences and worldviews.

Discussion & Implications

As described in detail above, the results of this study demonstrate translanguaging to be a beneficial strategy not only for increasing engagement of multilingual learners but also in building a safe classroom environment that promotes cross-cultural collaboration and sociocultural awareness.

Across all three data sources, it was evident that students saw the classroom as having established group norms (Brazill, 2020), being accepting of diverse views (Holley & Steiner, 2005), and inviting students' knowledge contributions (Acosta & Woodard, 2022)--all components of an educational safe space. Students expressed through their words and their behaviors that the classroom environment, the teacher's role, and the linguistic accessibility of class

content all contributed to their perception of safety within the classroom. However, students also conveyed discomfort as they participated in collaborative activities that pushed them outside of their comfort zone. Students demonstrated that although they felt safe, there was still a degree of discomfort that arose from participation in collaboration with peers who were different from themselves due to the possibility of misunderstanding from linguistic differences.

Due in part to the foundational safety of the classroom, students also perceived the leadership class to be an inclusive community. In all three data sources, students displayed their connections with one another, often demonstrating their rapport through narratives about each other and their shared experiences. These connections that students shared were developed through collaboration that took place almost constantly in the Civic Leadership classroom. One of the important aspects to consider here was how translanguaging contributed to the collaboration that was able to happen and the connections that were formed because of it. For example, in the interviews, three students mentioned how they used Spanish-English translation posters to communicate with a student with limited English proficiency, and in my observations, two non-native speakers of English with different primary languages (Spanish and Italian) frequently used their native languages to negotiate meaning. The ability for students to use their diverse linguistic funds of knowledge helped students communicate and understand one another, which in turn fostered peer relationships.

Because students engaged in frequent communication, they were constantly exposed to diverse viewpoints and ideas, which provided opportunities for developing awareness. Across the three data

sources, students exhibited that they grew in their understanding of themselves and others through their Civic Leadership classroom experiences. Students who had been limited in their exposure to cultural and linguistic diversity found the Civic Leadership class to offer a different lens through which they might view society and their interactions within it, something which was particularly salient in the interviews with participants.

In general, both monolingual and multilingual students exhibited a positive regard for the use of translanguaging in their EMI Civic Leadership class. Multilingual students, such as Alicia, felt that translanguaging was a factor in making classroom content and activities accessible. Additionally, ML students saw translanguaging as a factor in making them feel more welcome and accepted (safe) in the classroom community. From the other perspective, monolingual students felt that translanguaging furthered their awareness of their identity/culture and the cultures of others. They expressed that they felt that translanguaging encouraged collaboration and connections with ML students that would not otherwise have been possible. This was evident in the comparisons that students made between the translanguaging Civic Leadership classroom and other EMI classrooms.

However, ML students primarily saw translanguaging as a strategy used by the teacher and primarily preferred to use the privileged language of English in classroom interactions and activities. ML students felt that the lack of other students who share their language and concerns about the time it would take the teacher to translate their assignments were limiting factors on their use of translanguaging. Monolingual students also felt that although translanguaging opened avenues of communication, it also led to some miscommunication. Thus, while students

generally held a positive view of translanguaging, they did not always view it as practical. In future studies, it is worth investigating if the discomfort TP incites is requisite to sociocultural growth or if it might cause unnecessary anxiety, which distracts from the overarching objectives of the class.

It is apparent that there is a need for further research examining the role of translanguaging pedagogy in building an inclusive classroom community of multicultural discovery. This research contributes to the overall theory that translanguaging is a pedagogy that is useful for enhancing the participation of multilingual students in classrooms that use their non-native language as the language of instruction and postulates that translanguaging also enriches the experience of monolingual students. Although this study demonstrated the possibilities for translanguaging as a strategy for strengthening cross-cultural connections and collaboration, there is a need to further develop the interview and observation protocol to more closely investigate students' experiences with translanguaging classrooms.

This research has important implications for educators of linguistically diverse learners. If teachers want to create classrooms that are truly welcoming for all, we must consider the possible position of languages other than English within our classrooms. Additionally, educators should seek to understand how translanguaging can contribute to multilingual students' classroom experiences not only in terms of participation, but also in regard to their relationships with peers. Interactions between linguistically diverse peers affect both monolingual and multilingual students, and translanguaging in highly collaborative classroom spaces may increase these interactions or at least open these avenues.

This interaction can lead to students' bettering their understanding of one another and awareness of their humanity, which promotes feelings of safety within the classroom, thus encouraging increased participation (Brazill, 2020; Holley & Steiner, 2005; Mae et al., 2013). The dissemination of the information gleaned through the data collection and analysis in this study will surely aid in developing a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

References

Acosta, M. M., & Woodard, P. (2022). Awakening the essence of classroom community building. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *22*(4), 540–564. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984221136057

Adaval, R., & Wyer, R. S. (2022). Political ideology and consumption: Perspectives and effects. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *7*(3), 247–254. https://doi.org/10.1086/720513

Aoyama, R. (2020). Exploring Japanese high school students' L1 use in translanguaging in the communicative EFL classroom. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language, 23*(4), 1-18.

Bender, K., Negi, N., & Fowler, D. N. (2010). Exploring the relationship between self-awareness and student commitment and understanding of culturally responsive social work practice. *Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, *19*(1), 34–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313200903531990

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking. *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*(13), 1802–1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Bledsoe, T. S., & Baskin, J. J. (2014). Recognizing student fear: The elephant in the classroom. *College Teaching*, *62*(1), 32–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2013.831022

Cavanaugh, M. P. (1996). History of teaching English as a second language. *The English Journal, 85*(8), 40–44.

Clapper, T. C. (2010). Creating the safe learning environment. *PAILAL, 3*(2), 1-6.

CNN. (2015, September 17). *Trump: We speak English here, not Spanish*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNjcAgNu1Ac.

Collier, V. P. (1992). The Canadian bilingual immersion debate: A synthesis of research findings. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 14* (1), 87-97.

Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (2004). The astounding effectiveness of dual language education for all. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice, 2* (1), 1-20.

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Darwin Holmes, A. G. (2020). Researcher positionality - a consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - a new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

De Costa, P. I., & Qin, K. (2015). English language education in the United States: Past, present, and future issues. In L.T. Wong, & A. Dubey-Jhaveri (Eds.), *English language education in a global world* (pp.229-238). Nova Science.

Delanty, G., Wodak, R., & Jones, P. (2011). *Identity, belonging and migration*. Liverpool University Press.

Dietrich, S., & Hernandez, E. (2022, December 13). *Language use in the United States: 2019*. United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/acs/acs-50.pdf

Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction*. Sage.

Flynn, E. E., Hoy, S. L., Lea, J. L., & García, M. A. (2021). Translanguaging through story: Empowering children to use their full language repertoire. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *21*(2), 283–309. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798419838569

Gándara, P., Escamilla, K. (2017). Bilingual education in the United States. In Garcia, O., Lin, A., & May, S. (Eds.), *Bilingual and multilingual education* (pp. 439-452). Springer.

García, O. (2020). Translanguaging and Latinx bilingual readers. *The Reading Teacher*, *73*(5), 557–562. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1883

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave McMillan.

García Garrido, M. I., & Fernández Álvarez, M. (2011). Historical perspectives of bilingual education in the United States. *Education in the Knowledge Society, 12*(3), 41–55.

Grbich, C. (2013) *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Hakelind, C., Steinvall, A., & Deutschmann, M. (2020). The power of AHA! on stimulating and guiding students towards self-awareness and critical reflection while teaching about personality psychology and gender stereotypes. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *21*(1), 57–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475725720979460

Hodgins, J. (2016, November). Towards a psychology of belonging: A theoretical model [PowerPoint slides]. Health and Human Sciences Symposium, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316450437_Towards_a_psychology_of_belonging_A_theoretical_model.

Hofmann, M., Jolivel, A., Huss, D., & Ambiaux, C. (2020). *International migration: Drivers, factors and megatrends*. International Centre for Migration Policy Development. https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/51472/file/Policy%2520Paper%2520-%2520Geop olitical%2520Outlook%2520on%2520International%2520Migration.pdf

Holley, L. C., & Steiner, S. (2005). Safe space: Student perspectives on classroom environment. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *41*(1), 49–64. https://doi.org/10.5175/jswe.2005.200300343

Howard, G. R. (2016). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Huber, L. P. (2009). Challenging racist nativist framing: Acknowledging the community cultural wealth of undocumented Chicana college students to reframe the immigration debate. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 704–730. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.r7j1xn011965w186

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*. Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, K. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Karlsson, A., Nygård Larsson, P., & Jakobsson, A. (2020). The continuity of learning in a translanguaging science classroom. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *15*(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-019-09933-y

Kenner, C., & Gregory, E. (2003). Becoming biliterate. *Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy*, 178–188. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608207.n15

Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V. S., & Miller, S. M. (2003). *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context*. Cambridge University Press.

Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Sociocultural theory and second language learning: Introduction to the Special issue. *The Modern Language Journal*, *78*(4), 418–420. https://doi.org/10.2307/328580

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Linton, A. (2006). *Language politics and policy in the United States: Implications for the immigration debate* (Working Paper No. 141). University of California, San Diego. https://ccis.ucsd.edu/_files/wp141.pdf

Lucas, T., & Katz, A. (1994). Reframing the debate: The roles of native languages in English-only programs for language minority students. *TESOL Quarterly*, *28*(3), 537–561. https://doi.org/10.2307/3587307

Mae, B., Cortez, D., & Preiss, R. W. (2013). Safe spaces, difficult dialogues, and critical thinking. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 7*(2), 5.

Martin-Beltrán, M., Guzman, N. L., & Chen, P.-J. J. (2017). 'Let's think about it together:' How teachers differentiate discourse to mediate collaboration among linguistically diverse students. *Language Awareness*, *26*(1), 41–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2016.1278221

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Mertens, D. M. (2019). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. (5th ed.). Sage.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Sage.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, May 7). *English learners in public schools*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf

Ollerhead, S. (2019). Teaching across semiotic modes with multilingual learners: Translanguaging in an Australian classroom. *Language and Education: An International Journal*, *33*(2), 106–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1516780

Pacheco, M. B., & Miller, M. E. (2016). Making meaning through translanguaging in the literacy classroom. *Reading Teacher*, *69*(5), 533–537. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1390

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Republican National Committee (U.S). (2016) *GOP.com, Republican National Committee*. https://lccn.loc.gov/2003618832

Roberts, G. (2021). *ARC completes national canvass of dual language immersion programs in U.S. public schools*. American Councils for International Education. https://www.americancouncils.org/news/announcements-featured-content/arc-completes-national-canvass-dual-language-immersion-programs

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Sage.

Sayfulloevna, S. S. (2023). Safe learning environment and personal development of students. *International Journal of Formal Education, 2*(3), 7–12.

Scott, E. (2015, September 3). *Trump: Bush should speak English when in the U.S.* CNN Politics. https://www.cnn.com/2015/09/02/politics/donald-trump-jeb-bush-spanish/index.html

Song, J., Howard, D., & Olazabal-Arias, W. (2022). Translanguaging as a strategy for supporting multilingual learners' social emotional learning. *Education Sciences*, *12*(7), https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12070475

Tai, K. W. H., & Wei, L. (2021). Co-Learning in Hong Kong English medium instruction mathematics secondary classrooms: A translanguaging perspective. *Language & Education: An International Journal*, *35*(3), 241–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2020.1837860

Williams, C. (1994). *Arfarniad o ddulliau dysgu ac addysgu yng nghyd-destun addysg uwchradd ddwyieithog* [Doctoral dissertation, The North Wales School of Education]. https://research.bangor.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/arfarniad-o-ddulliau-dysgu-ac-addysgu-yng-nghyd-destun-addysg-uwc/

Williams, C. (1996). Secondary education: Teaching in the bilingual situation. In C. Williams, G. Lewis, & C. Baker (Eds.), *The Language Policy: Taking Stock (*pp. 39-78). Llangefni, United Kingdon: Coleg Menai.

Williams, C. (2002). *A Language Gained: A Study of Language Immersion at 11-16 Years of Age*. Academia. https://www.academia.edu/37435946/A_LANGUAGE_GAINED_A_Study_of_Language_Immersion_at_11_16_years_of_age_CEN_WILLIAMS

Wierzbicka, A. (2010). Cross-cultural communication and miscommunication: The role of cultural keywords. *Intercultural Pragmatics - INTERCULT PRAGMAT*, *7*, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1515/IPRG.2010.001

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Kim, H. K., & Lee, S. (2012). Teacher's use of funds of knowledge to promote class participation and engagement in an EFL context. In Yoon, b., & Kim, H.K. (Eds.), *Teachers' roles in second language learning: Classroom applications of sociocultural theory* (pp. 121–134). Information Age Publishing.

Zhang, Y., & Jocuns, A. (2022). From natural translanguaging to planned translanguaging: Developing classroom translanguaging as pedagogy in a private university in China. *Arab World English Journal*, *13*(1), 313–329. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.20

Zhang-Wu, Q. (2022). Multilingual students' perspectives on translanguaging in first-year undergraduate writing classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, *13*(2), e651. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.651

Appendix

Interview Protocol

- Suppose I was a new student to the Civic Leadership class, what would you tell me about the experiences in this class and what to expect?
- Monolingual means knowing one language, multilingual means knowing more than one language. I identify as multilingual because I know French, English, and Spanish. Would you consider yourself to be monolingual or multilingual?
- As I mentioned before we began, last fall I began using translanguaging pedagogy in my class. What differences did you see (if any) between your experiences in your traditional English-only classes and your experiences in my class?
- *For multilingual students*: Describe a time when you used/might use translanguaging in class.
- *For monolingual students:* Describe a time when you saw translanguaging taking place in class.
    - Probe: How do you feel about when translanguaging takes place in class?
    - Probe: What benefits and drawbacks do you see to translanguaging?
- Is there anything else that you want to tell me that may be useful for me to better understand your experience?