American Journal of Qualitative Research
2026, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 1-28
https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/18001

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
ISSN: 2576-2141

"You Can Continue in Spanish—I Understand": Intentionality and Equity Tensions in a Translanguaging Classroom

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ABSTRACT
English dominance in U.S. classrooms continues to marginalize multilingual learners, limiting their access to equitable participation and identity expression. This qualitative heuristic critical ethnographic case study examined Translanguaging Pedagogy (TP) as a culturally sustaining practice in an English Medium Instruction (EMI) high school science classroom. The study took place in a linguistically diverse Midwestern urban school where 22 of 27 students spoke a home language other than English. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students, and document analysis. Findings revealed four interrelated themes: Building Classroom Community, Teacher as Reflective Practitioner, Language as Identity, and Equity Tensions. Data analysis showed that translanguaging practices fostered collaboration, belonging, and deeper conceptual understanding while affirming students' linguistic and cultural identities. The teacher's intentionality was central to sustaining these multilingual spaces, yet equity tensions persisted as English remained the dominant academic language. The study underscores the importance of teachers approaching TP with purposeful, reflection, and a commitment to disrupting linguistic hierarchies. Implications for practice include the need for professional learning that prepares educators to design equitable, culturally sustaining environments where all students—monolingual and multilingual alike—can participate fully in the co-construction of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Translanguaging Pedagogy, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, English Medium Instruction, Multilingual Students, Classroom Community.

As the number of multilingual students in United States schools continues to rise, teachers struggle to meet the needs of increasingly linguistically diverse student populations. Teachers often lack sufficient training on supporting students with a native language other than English which can contribute to "opportunity gaps" (Milner, 2012) for these students (Kiramba et al., 2022; Master et al., 2016). Opportunity gaps have resulted in higher dropout rates, higher rates of grade retention, and lower academic performance across subjects such as reading and math for multilingual students compared to compared to first language (L1) speakers (Bühmann & Trudell, 2008; Drake, 2014; Mullis et al., 2017). The discrepancy in academic outcomes between students instructed in their L1

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versus those instructed in a nonnative language underscores the critical role of language in educational success.

Although there has been a growing recognition of the benefits of multilingualism in education since the 1990s (MacSwan, 2018; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017), many policies and practices limit multilingual students' equitable access to world language and heritage language education (Chávez-Moreno, 2021). Students are often pressured to assimilate, leading to the loss of their non-English languages (Flores & García, 2017). With one-fourth of households in the United States using a language other than English at home (U.S. Census, 2020), supporting the maintenance and development of students' home languages in schools is necessary for society to benefit from multilingual students' linguistic assets.

Without critical evaluation of how the language of instruction either valorizes or marginalizes students' knowledge systems, and without fostering and valuing students' multilingualism, schools perpetuate social inequalities and bolster existing social hierarchies. Historically, English has maintained a position of power in schools in the U.S., with policies mandating English as the language of instruction in public schools. The rise of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies offers promise, but the position of multilingual students in United States education continues to be shaped by broader societal power dynamics (May, 2019). The United States education system faces the dual challenge of addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse student population while overcoming entrenched inequities.

Multilingual Students in Focus

Throughout United States educational history there have been different labels used for identifying students with a native language other than English (e.g. English language learner (ELL), English as a second language (ESL) student, student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), etc.). Much of the current literature employs the term Emergent Bilingual (EB), but this study uses the term multilingual (ML). I intentionally use the term multilingual for this population in recognition of the additional linguistic assets these students possess many of whom have capacities in more than two languages.

Although ML students may have complex linguistic proficiencies and capacity for communication, they are often excluded from meaningful social interaction. ML students often experience feelings of loneliness and isolation due to their linguistic identity, contributing to a sense of exclusion within the school environment (Acar, 2023; Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). Learning is a fundamentally social process that occurs through interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978), and language learning is most effective through peer interaction and classroom participation (Przymus, 2016). Research shows that students instructed in their L1 are more likely to engage actively and confidently in classroom activities compared to those instructed in a nonnative language (Bühmann & Trudell, 2008). For ML students learning in a language that is not their L1, linguistic gaps can impede their ability to effectively access social activities for learning (Bryzzheva, 2002).

Segregation and linguistic isolation can be particularly detrimental to ML students' achievement and social-emotional development (Acar, 2023, Gándara & Hopkins, 2010) as students' sense of belonging and self-esteem is related to their classroom participation and academic success (Rangvid, 2018; Sedláček & Šeďova, 2020). Feelings of isolation reduce ML students' willingness or ability to engage in classroom activities (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). Conversely, when students are allowed to participate in meaningful social interactions that do not require proficiency in the language of instruction, students feel a greater sense of belonging (Szecsi et al., 2025; Takeuchi, 2015). It is thus important for teachers to create opportunities for ML

students to socially engage in ways not predicated on English language mastery. Translanguaging Pedagogy offers a potential strategy for such.

Translanguaging Theory and Pedagogy

Although the term translanguaging (Baker, 2011) was originally conceived to describe a linguistic practice and process of knowledge construction, a theory of translanguaging emerged as an applied critical theory of language. Translanguaging Theory rejects the artificial boundaries of named languages and presupposes a plurilingual view of language as a cognitive process whereby individuals produce their own idiolect (Wei, 2018). MLs' idiolects are composed of lexical and grammatical features of more than one socially and politically defined language in the same way that monolinguals' idiolects consist of lexical and grammatical features from regional varieties of one named language (Otheguy et al., 2015).

Human cognition and communication are not solely limited to linguistic expression. Humans use textual, aural, spatial, and visual modes to communicate. Language is a "multisensory and multimodal semiotic system interconnected with other identifiable but inseparable cognitive systems" (Wei, 2018, p. 21). The term languaging emerged to express the ways individuals selectively and intentionally use multiple named languages and/or modalities to communicate, simultaneously interpreting the world around and constructing meaning from it (García & Wei, 2014).

As individuals creatively language they generate their own sociocultural identities, values, and practices. In drawing from more than one named language, each carrying its own sociocultural and political context, translanguaging invites individuals to use their diverse resources to make sense of the complexity of their worlds and their intersectional identities. It is thus an imaginative and critical endeavor that allows individuals to imbue their communication with expressions from multiple social, political, and cultural contexts (Kenner & Gregory, 2003).

A practical extension of Translanguaging Theory, Translanguaging Pedagogy (TP) refers to instructional strategies by which teachers encourage students to make meaning of their learning with the entirety of their linguistic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014). TP can be used as an equity pedagogy by acknowledging the flexible and additive nature of multilingualism and opening opportunities for critical conversations about the rigid, monolingual nature of many United States classrooms (Yilmaz, 2021). Lewis et al. explain (2012), "Translanguaging concerns effective communication, function rather than form [emphasis added]" (p. 1). When students are allowed to focus on meaning rather than grammatical correctness, they actively listen to, analyze, and interpret the meaning of others' language within the specific context of the interaction. When teachers use TP to encourage students to reflect on their linguistic identities and experiences it opens opportunities for critical conversations about dominant ideologies in schooling (Leonet et al., 2024).

Research on TP shows that when students are allowed to use their home languages as a bridge to the dominant language used in schooling, they are more likely to succeed academically and socially (Charamba, 2020; Lewis et al., 2012, etc.). Students strategically use translanguaging to enhance their understanding of the content as well as to facilitate more efficient classroom procedures and interactions (Aoyama, 2020). Moreover, TP can help bridge the gap between home and school cultures by creating spaces where students can connect their personal experiences and identities to academic learning (Karlsson et al., 2020; Stavrou, 2020). When students connect their personal experiences to classroom content, they are more likely to be engaged, have a deeper understanding of content, and develop analytical skills for critical thinking (Karlsson et al., 2020; Martin-Beltran et al., 2017).

Translanguaging Pedagogy as Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

TP is a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Prominent researchers and theorist Paris (2012) indicates that CSP "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95). With the goal of creating more equitable learning environments by integrating students' cultural references into all aspects of learning, culturally sustaining teachers seek to move beyond a deficit framework of standardized achievement, focusing on fostering student strengths, critical thinking, and respectful relationships (Carter-Stone, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012; Paris, 2017). CSP encourages students to use their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to shape their learning, elevating student voices and fostering greater participation (Sosa & Bhathena, 2019).

By valuing students' diverse linguistic resources, teachers can foster collaborative learning experiences where students share their perspectives and build upon each other's ideas (Dagenais et al., 2008; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Valdés, 2022). This allows students become active participants in the collaborative knowledge-building process (Cekaite & Björk-Willén. 2012). This collaborative approach can lead to deeper understanding and critical thinking as students engage in meaningful discussions and problem-solving activities (Cekaite & Björk-Willén. 2012; Dagenais et al., 2008).

Through culturally sustaining TP, teachers can create more equitable and inclusive learning environments where ML students can develop a sense of belonging (DeNicolo, 2019; Prada, 2022). However, simply "allowing" students to translanguage is not enough. Research demonstrates that students may feel uncomfortable using their L1 if they perceive use of it as a crutch or as an indicator of lack of proficiency in their second or other language (L2) (Aoyama, 2020; Zhang-Wu, 2021). This poses the question of how to employ culturally sustaining TP to encourage student translanguaging.

Purpose of the Study

While there is significant research regarding the use of translanguaging in educational settings, much of it focuses on academic outcomes and language acquisition in English language classrooms. Less attention paid to the culturally sustaining aspect of TP. The majority of prior research on translanguaging has taken place outside of the U.S. in contexts where English is not the dominant language (e.g. China, Sweden, Turkey). Because the sociopolitical context of English language usage of prior research is different than that which multilingual students in the U.S. are immersed, there are questions of the transferability of results. The limited amount of research that has been done in English as the dominant language settings has raised concerns about the operationality of translanguaging in such contexts (Costley et al., 2020; Marshal et al., 2019).

The aim of the present heuristic critical ethnographic case study is to examine both multilingual and monolingual students' perceptions of their experiences in an English medium instruction (EMI) science classroom that uses TP. Four research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What factors mold multilingual students' engagement with and use of translanguaging practices in an English medium instruction (EMI) classroom in the United States?

RQ2: How do monolingual students engage with and experience Translanguaging Pedagogy in an EMI classroom in the United States?

RQ3: How does the teacher perceive multilingual students' interactions with and use of translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom?

RQ4: How does the teacher perceive monolingual students' interactions with translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom?

Design and Methodology

As the purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of a group who shares a common experience, a heuristic critical ethnographic case study approach was used.

Sampling

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to ensure that the selected site was a sufficiently compelling case. Based on the specified aims of this study as outlined in the research questions, the eligibility criteria to participate in this study were as follows: 1) be a K-12 classroom, 2) use English as the medium of instruction and not be designated as a bilingual, English as a second or other language (ESOL), or foreign language classroom, 3) have both monolingual and multilingual students, and 4) have a teacher that has been practicing translanguaging pedagogy for at least one year. The sampling tool used was a survey sent via email to all teachers in an urban school district in a large metropolitan area in the United States Midwest soliciting voluntary participation in the study. The survey included closed and open-ended questions to aid in determining the eligibility of each classroom for participation. While two responding teachers' classrooms met the first three criteria, only one respondent had used TP for at least a year.

Study Site and Participants

The setting for this research is a multi-grade level high school science classroom. To protect the privacy of participants, pseudonyms were used. Dearborn High School is one of four community high schools in the expansive Dearborn School District. The Dearborn District serves a diverse urban student population of over 14,000 with 35 schools. The student body of Dearborn District reflects the multicultural tapestry of the region, with significant representation from Black (47%) and Hispanic (32%) communities, alongside a smaller percentage of White (12%) and Asian (5%) students.

Originally opened in 1925, Dearborn High School is a microcosm of the district's diversity. Located in a historic neighborhood known for its cultural and linguistic diversity, Dearborn High is home to 1,070 students from more than 40 countries, with over 30 languages spoken within. Of the student body, 36.9% identify as Black, 50.7% identify as Hispanic, 6.6% identify as Asian, 3.9% identify as White, and 1.1% identify as multi-race; 100% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The school places a strong emphasis on supporting multilingual learners, with about 60% of students classified as English language learners (ELLs). It is important to note here that while some degree of linguistic diversity is typical in most U.S. schools, the intense variety of languages spoken and percentage of students with a native language (L1) other than English at Dearborn High School is not generally representative of an average U.S. school in the Midwest.

The class that is the unit of analysis for the present study is Ms. Franklin's Physics First class composed of 27 students and one teacher. Of the 27 students in the class, five are monolingual (English) and 22 are multilingual (Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, and Swahili represented). While the class was composed of 27 students, only 16 students returned the necessary signed parent consent and student assent forms to be able to participate. This may have been a result of the average daily attendance rate being low (18 out of 27). Table 1 describes the linguistic repertoires of the 17 total participants.

Table 1
Study Participants

Participant	Home Language	Other Languages Known/Learning
Ms. Franklin	English	French, Spanish
Sophia	Spanish	English
Colette	Swahili/English	
Selena	English	English
Opal	Spanish	
Xavier	Spanish/English	
Kya	Arabic	English
Angelo	Spanish	English
Jason	Spanish	English
Isaiah	Spanish	English
Elisa	English/Spanish	
Frances	Spanish	English
Andres	Spanish	English, Portuguese
Peter	Spanish	English, Portuguese
Miles	English/Spanish	
AJ	English	
Velma	Spanish	English

There is a wide range of English proficiency in the class, with students' WIDA ACCESS scores ranging from two ("Emerging") to six ("Reaching"); however, because I did not obtain IRB permission to collect WIDA scores, students' English proficiency is not presented. While the class is not designated as a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) class, Ms. Franklin usually spends her plan period collaborating with the SEI Physics teacher because she has such linguistic diversity in her class.

Ms. Franklin's Physics First class uses a Modern Classroom Project model with a flexible seating arrangement. In this blended learning environment, learning is self-paced and mastery based. Direct instruction is predominantly delivered via the Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas. While the teacher gives occasional whole-class direct instruction, for the most part students watch the recordings of lessons the teacher created on Canvas. The videos include embedded questions and have close captions which can be translated in a variety of languages. Each lesson has assignments that are divided into three categories: "Must Do," "Should Do," and "Aspire to Do." Must Do assignments are required, graded work, Should Do assignments are extra practice, and Aspire to Do assignments are extensions of learning and challenging assignments.

Students progress through lessons at their own pace, and grades are based on short "Mastery Checks" that students complete when they feel they have mastered the content and are ready to move on to the next learning target. Students must pass each Mastery Check with at least an 80% before they can move to the next lesson. The teacher uses a progress tracker posted on Canvas to check in with each student every class period, and the "on pace" lesson is listed on the board.

In general, the class is very fluid and flexible with students and the teacher moving around the room frequently. Because students move at their own pace and are encouraged to work together there is constant conversation. Although students may have preferred seating partners, there is constant collaboration that often extends beyond one group or another. It is a lively space that is not often quiet.

Data Sources

Data sources for this study consist of multiple, semi-structured interviews, document collection, and classroom observations. As a framework, ethnography relies on extensive naturalistic observations and semi-structured interviews as sources of data to describe and interpret participants' experiences. Due to time constraints, scheduling disruptions, and initial difficulty accessing the study site, I was only able to conduct thirteen 90-minute participant observations over the course of the Spring 2025 semester.

Four weeks into observations I began participant interviews. I interviewed the teacher twice, five ML students, and one monolingual student. Because the class only had five monolingual students, and three of those students did not provide consent forms, it was difficult to arrange an interview with another monolingual student. The demographics of the interview participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Home Language	Other Languages
Ms. Franklin	Female	English	French, Spanish
Sophia	Female	Spanish	English
Isaiah	Male	Spanish	English
Andres	Male	Spanish	English/Portuguese
Peter	Male	Spanish	English/Portuguese
Miles	Male	English/Spanish	
AJ	Male	English	

To corroborate and contextualize the data I gathered from observations and interviews, I also collected data in the form of documents (i.e., lesson plans, student assignments, and journal entries).

Data Analysis

The theoretical traditions of heuristic inquiry and critical theory which guided the design of this study also directed the data analysis process. The six phases of heuristic inquiry were used in the analysis of data (Bach, 2002). During the Illumination phase both enumerative content analysis and thematic analysis were used to inductively interpret and analyze the data.

I engaged in an emergent process while moving through the heuristic inquiry phases, through which my findings took shape inductively and in collaboration with my participants. Table 3 presents the interpretive codes that compose each theme.

Table 3

Themes and interpretive codes identified among all three data sources

Themes	Interpretive Codes
Equity Tensions (1,550)	Environmental power dynamics (298)
	Teacher language usage shapes student language usage (195)
	Monolingual students expect a ML environment (164)
	Lack of communication (133)
	Technology in the classroom (179)
	Academic Language (344)
Building Classroom Community (1,338)	Collaboration as foundation (337)
	Personal relationships (448)
	Socialization (327)
	Sense of community identity (114)
Teacher as Reflective Practitioner (1,014)	Professional Community (100)
	Scaffolding (226)
	(Multi)Literacy-Focused (246)
	Reflection (113)
	Structured but Flexible (329)
Language as Identity (937)	Selective and intentional language usage (176)
	Sense of personal and cultural identity (112)
	Linguistic hierarchies (237)

Findings

Theme 1: Building Classroom Community

The theme of Building Classroom Community illustrates how translanguaging practices, including the use of multiple languages for both social and academic purposes, foster a strong sense of community. Guided by the definition of community proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), this theme includes how students—both multilingual and monolingual—use translanguaging to build relationships across linguistic lines, engage in social dialogue, and collaborate academically. This demonstrates that translanguaging is not just a pedagogical tool but a community-building mechanism.

A key feature of the class community is the collaboration and mutual support that occurred naturally during class activities. In every observation, students from diverse linguistic backgrounds worked together to discuss concepts and solve problems. Students comfortably switched between Spanish and English, with some students taking the initiative to assist peers struggling with language barriers. For example, in his interview Miles noted that he usually helps Jason with schoolwork to understand words (Second Interview, March 28), illustrating a sense of community identity where both monolingual students and ML students collaborate to help each other succeed. As AJ noted: “You know, academically wise...if there's a classmate who doesn't speak English, [we] will help each other out” (First Interview, March 10, 2025). This demonstrates how translanguaging practices help to bridge linguistic gaps and build an inclusive learning environment where students feel a shared sense of accountability.

Additionally, nonacademic socialization between students reinforced a sense of shared emotional connection. Students frequently shared jokes in a mix of English and Spanish. For

instance, AJ and Jason often argued in a mix of languages, teasing, "Dude, do you not understand English?" when one of them did not correctly hear what was said (Field Note, March 24, 2025). Despite their playful critique of one another's language proficiencies, their shared use of English and Spanish highlighted their ability to navigate both linguistic spaces comfortably. These social interactions foster a sense of belonging that is not solely dependent on language but also on mutual respect and camaraderie, a key aspect of CSP (Sosa & Bhathena, 2019).

Evidence of students' personal relationships with one another was particularly salient in the moments when classroom management routines were taking place. For instance, during daily progress checks during the first five minutes of class, Angelo, Andres, and Peter often shared their personal stories as recent newcomers to the United States in Spanish, reflecting a shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). During an interview, Andres shared how, despite initial reservations, he and Peter found common ground and developed a deeper understanding of their classmates through their shared experiences and language exchanges (Second Interview, March 14, 2025). This speaks to the sense of personal connection that underpins the classroom community, where students are not just learning academic content, but also negotiating social and cultural identities in a supportive environment.

This fellowship helps students humanize and feel empathy for each other, further solidifying bonds of belonging. Andres remarked to me, "We are a school who accept people from other countries" (Second Interview, March 14, 2025), highlighting an environment of cultural sustainability. His sentiment echoed what Peter had stated previously:

> I think all schools should…allow all languages, because it kind of helps all people that went to that school, because they could feel more comfortable in that… school… a little more, like, a community of languages. Like, everybody kind of speaks, but then we also understand each other (First Interview, March 3).

The respect that students, both monolingual and ML, showed each other is a demonstration of a caring community of learners dedicated to the success of one another.

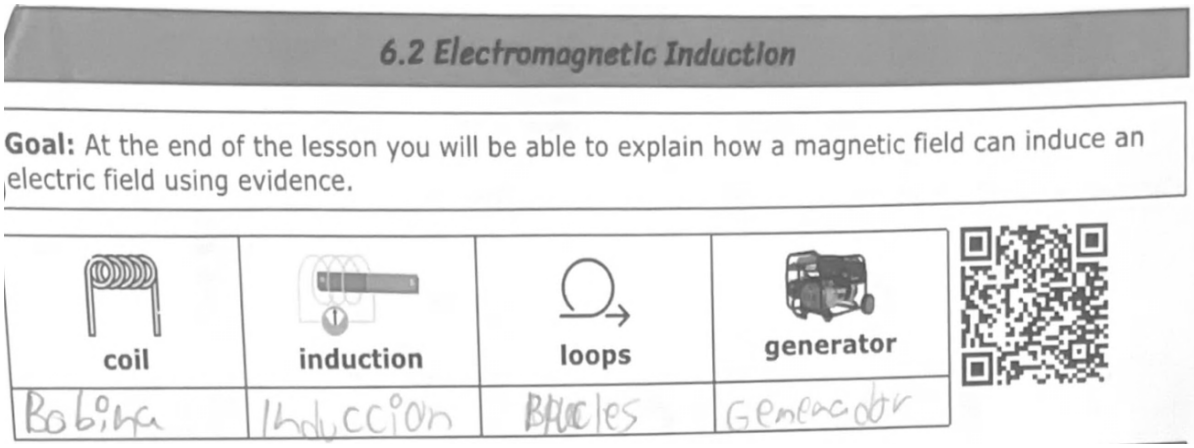
Theme 2: Teacher as Reflective Practitioner

Teacher as Reflective Practitioner addresses the central role the teacher takes in shaping the translanguaging space. The teacher used intentional scaffolding to create a (multi)literacy-focused class with a structured but flexible environment. According to Paris (2017), to effectively implement CSP, teachers must be critically reflective of their practice while centering an assets-based approach. In all three data types, the teacher exemplified reflective practice through intentional decisions and adjustments based on student needs.

During each observation, the teacher utilized a tracker that visually displayed the students' progress towards mastery throughout the unit. This transparency not only supported student agency but also highlighted the teacher's reflective awareness of how each student is progressing at their own pace. The choice to create a structured yet flexible environment, with students moving between different stations based on their progress, enabled them to work at their own pace while still being held accountable for their learning.

Within this self-paced learning environment, Ms. Franklin recognized the importance of (multi)literacy focused instruction and scaffolding on student prior knowledge to help students' meet their goals. As Figure 1 reveals, Ms. Franklin intentionally incorporated translation activities into assignments, asking ML students to engage with academic vocabulary in their home languages and inviting monolingual students to learn vocabulary in another language.

Figure 1
Andres's Unit 6 Note Packet



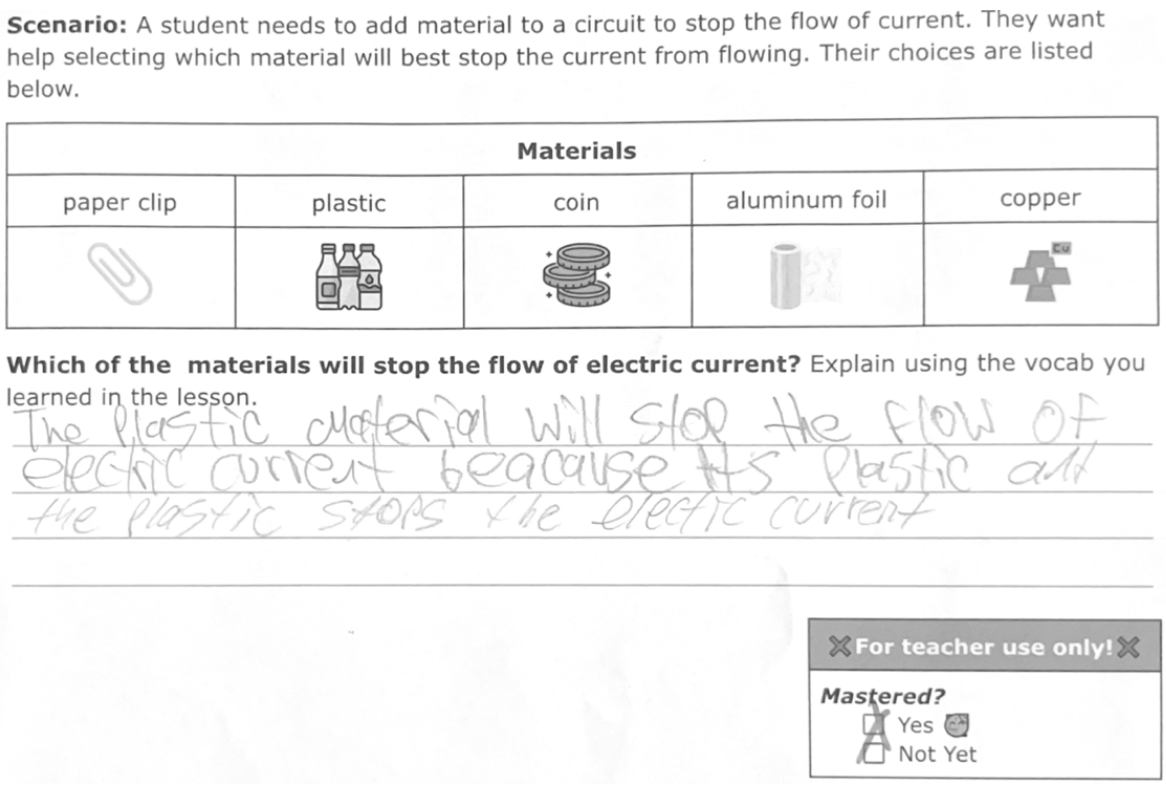
6.2 Electromagnetic Induction

Goal: At the end of the lesson you will be able to explain how a magnetic field can induce an electric field using evidence.

coil	induction	loops	generator
Bobina	Induccion	Bucles	Generador

In addition to integrated translation, Ms. Franklin used multimodal techniques to enhance student comprehension. For example, each assignment included pictures and illustrations that aided in student comprehension of academic topics as depicted in Figure 2. The illustrations provided along with the English vocabulary assists students in their composition of their written response.

Figure 2
Angelo's Unit 6 Notes Packet



Scenario: A student needs to add material to a circuit to stop the flow of current. They want help selecting which material will best stop the current from flowing. Their choices are listed below.

Materials				
paper clip	plastic	coin	aluminum foil	copper

Which of the materials will stop the flow of electric current? Explain using the vocab you learned in the lesson.

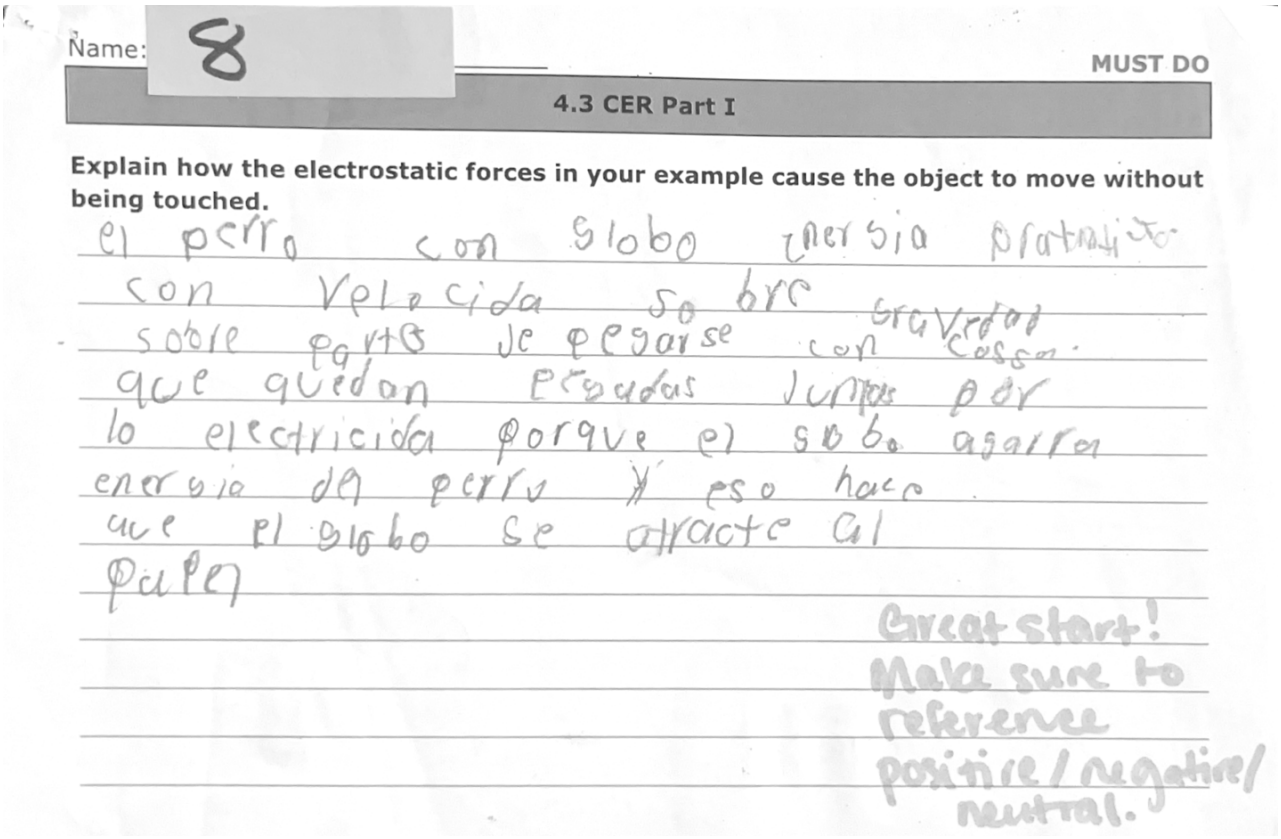
The plastic material will stop the flow of electric current because its plastic and the plastic stops the electric current

For teacher use only!

Mastered?
Yes
Not Yet

Figure 3

Jason's Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) Assignment


Name: 8

MUST DO

4.3 CER Part I

Explain how the electrostatic forces in your example cause the object to move without being touched.

el perro con globo tiene energia positiva con velocidad sobre papel se pegan con gravedad que quedan pegadas juntas por la electricidad porque el globo agarra energia del perro y eso hace que el globo se atracte al papel

Great start! Make sure to reference positive/negative/neutral.

Across the unit, the teacher integrated linguistic scaffolding for students to develop a CER essay about Coulomb's Law in both their home language and English (Field Note, February 28, 2025). This emphasis on structured writing and language development was further reinforced through real-time instruction, where the teacher reinforced students' academic language by modeling sentence structures of scientific reasoning. Students recognized and appreciated the support that Ms. Franklin provided. When asked if he uses Spanish for learning, Andres remarked:

> It's like [when] Ms. Franklin is asking for some stuff and I know the answer, but not in English. [She says] "You can write it down in Spanish and I'm going to translate it and tell you it's right or it's wrong." ...When she handed the paper back to me, she put the answer back in English, like under my answer, in parentheses. It's like, it's correct and this is how you write it or how you say it. Perfect. I can learn (Interview 1, March 6, 2025).

Ms. Franklin, in allowing students to write answers in their home language, values their diverse ways of knowing. In this example, she acknowledged that Andres understands and knows the content despite his inability to communicate that in English. Using this scaffolding she builds students' academic language in a way that is (multi)literacy focused.

The teacher's attention to her students' needs was also evident in how she provided personalized support. In every observation, Ms. Franklin circulated and provided individualized feedback. She asked guiding questions that helped students self-correct, indicating her ability to reflect on the learning process and adjust her support dynamically.

While Ms. Franklin did provide individual feedback and support, she also invited student collaboration for learning. For instance, during their unit on electrical charges, Ms. Franklin identified more knowledgeable individuals, one "expert" (student who had already passed the Mastery Check) per language represented, to support students who were struggling. This intentional scaffolding of interactions and awareness of both her students' linguistic proficiencies and level of mastery with subject matter demonstrates that Ms. Franklin is a highly Reflective Practitioner.

It is crucial to note that Ms. Franklin was part of a collaborative professional community. Ms. Franklin said she regularly reflects on her teaching strategies and actively seeks out professional development. She mentioned, "I work with the [Sheltered English Immersion] teacher who teaches [science], and we coordinate strategies" (Interview 1, February 25, 2025). This collaboration shows a willingness to learn from others, engage in reflective discussions, and apply new strategies in her classroom.

This desire for reflection is something Ms. Franklin expressed multiple time during both interviews. When asked her motivation for seeking professional community beyond what is required by her district, Ms. Franklin stated, "I naturally developed the habit of if I'm wanting to learn or improve something, then I can go to research…then I will go seek out other teachers' answers" (Interview 1, February 25, 2025). Rather than rely solely on rely solely on the professional development her district provided, Ms. Franklin actively and intentionally sought to improve her practice.

Theme 3: Language as Identity

Language as Identity describes students' awareness of the social and emotional weight of language. Their language choices reflect both internal identity negotiations and external societal pressures. Students' interactions with each other and the teacher clearly demonstrated selective and intentional language usage, especially regarding how they navigate different linguistic spaces within the classroom.

Observations reveal that students selectively and intentionally decide when to use specific languages, depending on their social context. Although all students engaged in group activities, linguistic hierarchies were present and shaped student interactions. Students whose home language is Spanish felt more comfortable translanguaging whereas students with home languages of Swahili and Arabic were more often quiet and worked alone. For instance, during collaborative work time I noted:

> [Jason] and [Elisa] and one other interchangeably use English and Spanish flexibly to talk about their social life while trying to work through a past assignment. [Colette], [Kya], and [Frances] are quiet, and when they do ask questions and participate, they do so in English (Field Note, March 4, 2025).

These patterns suggest that while translanguaging supported a sense of belonging and engagement for Spanish-speaking students, additional scaffolds may be needed improve cultural sustainability and support multilingual students from less linguistically represented backgrounds.

In the interviews, students reflected on how their language usage is intentionally tailored for the context. For instance, Peter shared that their language choice often depends on their audience (Interview 2, March 14, 2025). Miles articulated a similar pattern, when I asked about intentional language selection, "[W]ith Spanish...I can sometimes explain things easier to people... I talk to [Jason] in Spanish and explain the words to him, and it just makes it easier to be able to communicate... With [Elisa], it's mostly in English" (Second Interview, March 28). This

emphasizes language's function as a tool for social navigation, where students adapt their language use based on the familiarity or comfort level with the person they are speaking to.
Selective and intentional language usage extends beyond the class as well. Andres illustrates this, explaining his languaging process:

> When I'm with [Ms. Franklin], and [my peers] speak Spanish, I talk to them in Spanish... After school, when I stay for archery, I'll talk with [my friend] in English. But sometimes [when] I'm talking about something that makes me mad. I'm talking... in English, and I cross to Spanish (Interview 1, March 6, 2025).

Across all interviews, participants insinuated that when interacting with close friends or people who share the same linguistic background, they are more likely to use their home language. Isaiah explained, "Depende si tienes amigos que hablan como inglés y español. Sí, si a algunos no les gusta hablar español, tolas español y ellos te responden en inglés" [It depends on whether you have friends who speak both English and Spanish. Yes, if some don't like speaking Spanish, you can speak Spanish and they'll respond in English] (Interview 1, March 7, 2025). However, when ML participants are speaking to others who may not understand Spanish, they switch to English. This intentional language shift helps students feel socially integrated while maintaining their linguistic identity.

This desire and ability to tailor language usage is often reflective of students' home and outside of school languaging practices. For example, Isaiah stated, "Tengo familia con la que solo hablo inglés, pero con mi mamá y mi papá solo hablo español. Sí. Y con mi hermana a veces hablo inglés o español" [I have family with whom I only speak English, but with my mom and dad I only speak Spanish. Yes. And with my sister I sometimes speak English or Spanish] (Interview 2, March 23). In fact, when asked what motivates her to use English at school, Sophia expressed that, "Pues a mí lo que me motiva es, mi mamá y mi familia me ha dicho que aquí el Inglés es muy importante porque es un país estadounidense, obviamente" [Well, what motivates me is, my mom and my family have told me that English is very important here because it is an American country, obviously] (Interview 2, March 27). This demonstrates how students' multilingual practices are deeply rooted in their familial and cultural contexts, shaping how and why they choose to navigate between languages in the classroom.

Furthermore, students use their languaging practices to resist linguistic hierarchies at times. Andres expressed a sense of pride in his language and culture, saying, "I don't really care about the people that try to make me feel, like, weird or bad… I want to speak Spanish. I will speak Spanish" (Interview 2, March 14, 2025). This statement reveals a deep connection between language and identity, where students are not simply choosing languages based on convenience but also out of a desire to assert their cultural identity. The willingness to speak Spanish, despite possible discomfort from others, highlights how language serves as a cultural marker and a form of resistance against societal pressures to conform to monolingual English norms. Ms. Franklin is aware of students' sense of personal and cultural identity and the tension they may feel. She expressed:

> I think a lot of that probably comes from family…and culture… I can imagine like a full range of that depending on the family… Like, "Learn English so you can get the most of being here," and also, "Our culture is important and we're not going to lose that even though we're here" (Interview 2, March 17, 2025).

The teacher's awareness of her students' linguistic and cultural identities and their home lives is important for her understanding of how to accommodate and encourage students' multilingualism, a crucial component of CSP.

Theme 4: Equity Tensions

Equity Tensions illuminates that despite intentional efforts, students experience language hierarchies and systemic tensions remain. This theme highlights the equity challenges inherent in EMI translanguaging classrooms, especially regarding institutional structures and societal pressures. All three data sources revealed environmental power dynamics that may have influenced students' language usage.

Observations in the classroom revealed several equity tensions connected to environmental power dynamics and students' comfort with using their home languages. The most evident tension was related to linguistic dominance, with English and Spanish clearly privileged. Spanish-speaking students comfortably moved between Spanish and English for both social and academic purposes, while Swahili- and Arabic-speaking students remained largely quiet. This implicit marginalization of less dominant languages in classroom discourse limited participation for some students.

Additionally, students replicated or mirrored teacher language usage. While the teacher consistently encouraged the use of students' home languages, her own limited proficiency in languages other than English resulted in prioritization of English. Although the teacher is learning Spanish and allowed students to speak Spanish, she primarily responded in English, occasionally prompting students to switch to English (Field Note, February 11, 2025).

Ms. Franklin attempts to mitigate this power dynamic. For instance, she, "jumped into the conversation with [Sophia] and [Andres] to address a misconception she had heard them say in Spanish." When she interjected, "the students responded by switching to English to which the teacher responded 'No, you can continue in Spanish. I understand, I just don't know how to say what I want to say'" (Field Note, February 28, 2025). Despite teacher intentions, this established an implicit expectation that English remained the primary language for academic interactions, subtly reinforcing linguistic hierarchies and influencing student language choices in the classroom. Ms. Franklin also tries to use technology to reduce environmental power dynamics. For example, all instructional videos feature closed captions in a variety of languages, and she encourages students to use Google Translate to translate vocabulary words. However, these features can sometimes be difficult to use or malfunction. While Ms. Franklin's use of technology reflects a commitment to linguistic accessibility and student autonomy, the inconsistency of these tools highlights the need for more reliable and responsive supports.

Furthermore, students frequently articulated how societal and institutional pressures influenced their language use. Andres shared the discomfort of using Spanish in predominantly White contexts: "When it's so much White people, I get like, 'Oh, okay, hold on' [about using Spanish]" (Interview 2, March 14, 2025). This showcases a tension between cultural identity and societal expectations, highlighting the impact of external racialized linguistic hierarchies on student identities and comfort levels.

Other students also expressed that societal expectations influence their desire to learn and use English. When asked if he thought it was important to learn English, Isaiah replied, "Te puede ayudar en la vida a conseguir más fácil trabajo" [It can help you in life to get a job more easily] (Interview 2, March 23, 2025). While Isaiah said he felt it was necessary to learn English for future endeavors, he prefers speaking Spanish because that is what his family speaks, and it is easier for him to think in Spanish. Societal expectations and pressures shape students' selective languaging. Unfortunately, the school plays into the environmental power dynamics as well. When asked if the school provides information sent home to parents in multiple languages, Isaiah stated, "No, no me dan en inglés… A lot of parents don't like that [because] they can't speak English" (Interview 1, March 7, 2025). The teacher also expressed frustrations with district-level policies that disregarded multilingualism, highlighting broader structural tensions. Ms. Franklin stated: "There're so

manydistrict-wide things implemented where there's no thought to multilingualism or students… I voiced that in curriculum meetings, but nothing really happened from that. I think teachers oftentimes... are the ones doing the legwork" (Interview 2, March 17, 2025). This reveals an institutional tension wherein multilingual students' needs are not prioritized, shifting responsibility onto individual teachers to navigate linguistic inclusivity.

Although school practices and policy may not always encourage multilingualism, monolingual students expressed generally positive attitudes toward multilingualism, which appeared to reduce tensions among peers. AJ mentioned, "I don't think anyone cares if you speak Spanish… It's just normal" (Interview 1, March 10, 2025). Interview responses suggest a normalization of linguistic diversity among students, regardless of the specific languages being used. There was even curiosity. AJ expressed, "I want to learn Spanish so bad, like, it's ridiculous. But, like, also French… I want to know what they're talking about" (Interview 1, March 10, 2025). This desire to engage with languages beyond English signals a level of admiration for his multilingual peers and an interest in participating in broader cultural and linguistic exchanges.

This sense of appreciation for diversity was echoed by others. Miles (L1 English) articulated a similar idea, stating, "It's very diverse in that class... I think it helps... to see new cultures" (Interview 1, March 7, 2025). His reflection suggests that exposure to different languages and cultures in the classroom is not only tolerated but a meaningful part of his learning experience. For students like him, multilingualism becomes a valued asset that contributes to a richer social and educational environment. Despite institutional limitations, the peer culture within the classroom fosters a level of acceptance and openness that may help normalize and support multilingualism in everyday interactions.

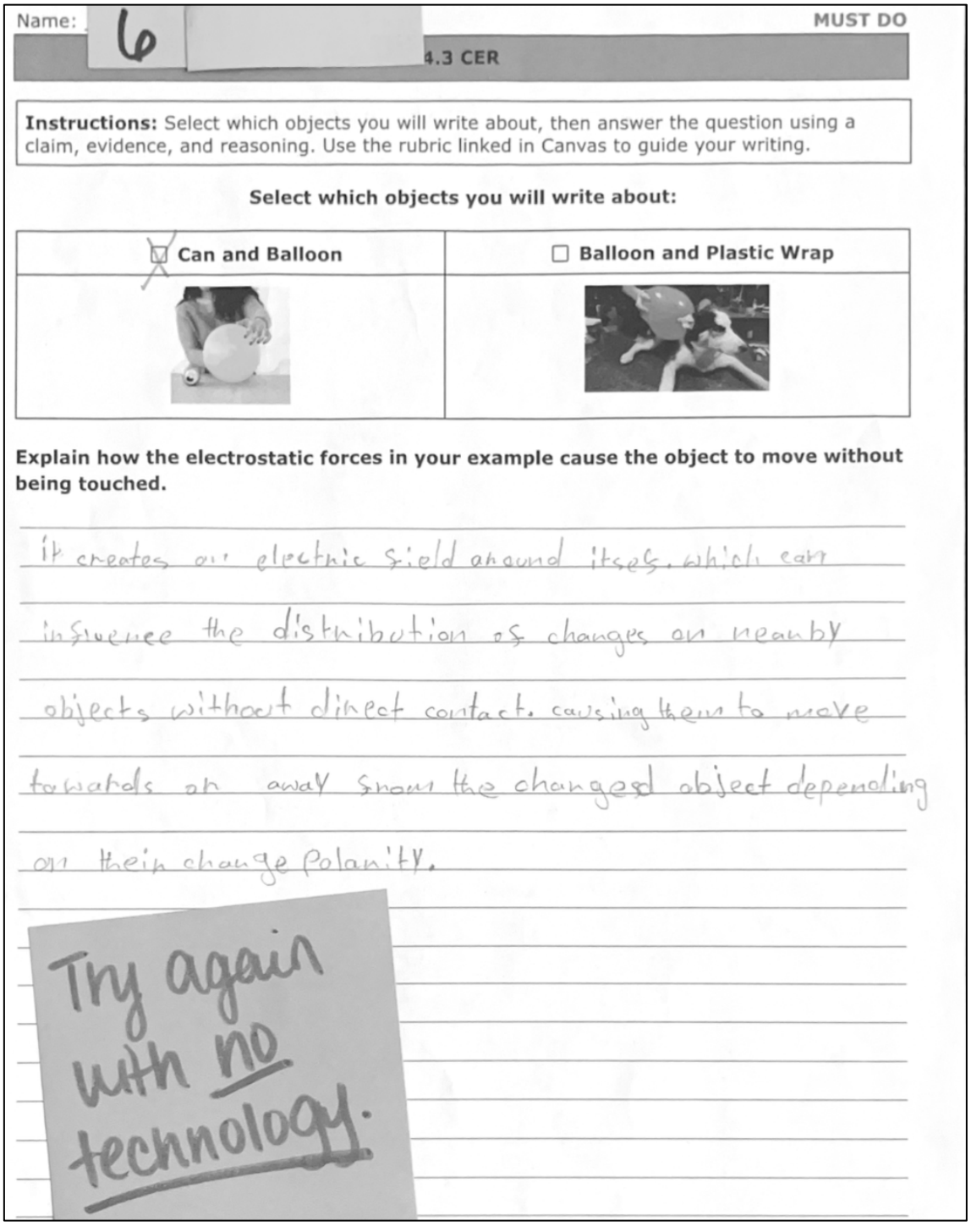
However, the comfort expressed by monolingual students contrasted with discomfort articulated by multilingual students. Sophia explained feeling hesitant to work with monolingual students due to language barriers: "Me pongo un poquito nerviosa, porque hay personas que hablan muy rápido, y no los entiendo a veces" [I get a little nervous, because there are people who speak very fast, and I don't understand them sometimes] (Interview 1, March 6, 2025). Peter also mentioned the difficulty of feeling left behind in interactions with monolingual English speakers: "I didn't understand what they said…when they were talking to me...too fast. So I say, 'Can you do a little bit slower for me, please?' And they say, 'Oh, I forgot that you don't speak English'" (Interview 1, March 6, 2025). This highlights a tension arising from the lack of effective communication between monolingual and ML students despite a generally inclusive environment.

While equity tensions persist, multilingual students demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness in overcoming these barriers. When asked how he responds when he encounters unfamiliar English vocabulary, Isaiah explained, "Puedo usar Google Translate y ella también te ayuda" [I can use Google Translate, and she also helps you] (Interview 1, March 7, 2025). Peter outlined a process by which he uses the teacher and a translator to learn academic vocabulary. This reveals a dual strategy: a willingness to independently troubleshoot using digital tools and a sense of trust in the teacher as a supportive resource. Rather than passively struggling with comprehension, ML students actively bridge communication gaps by drawing on both technological and relational supports, showcasing their adaptability and problem-solving skills in navigating linguistically complex environments.

Nevertheless, despite the explicitly stated permission for students to use their preferred languages, nearly all students completed assignments predominantly in English. While Spanish-speaking multilingual (ML) students occasionally utilized their home language, documents showed a stark absence of written Arabic and Swahili, indicating implicit pressure towards English dominance.

Figure 4

Kya's 4.3 Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) Assignment


Name: 6

MUST DO

4.3 CER

Instructions: Select which objects you will write about, then answer the question using a claim, evidence, and reasoning. Use the rubric linked in Canvas to guide your writing.

Select which objects you will write about:

☒ Can and Balloon	☐ Balloon and Plastic Wrap

Explain how the electrostatic forces in your example cause the object to move without being touched.

it creates an electric field around itself, which can influence the distribution of charges on nearby objects without direct contact, causing them to move towards or away from the charged object depending on their charge polarity.

Try again with no technology.

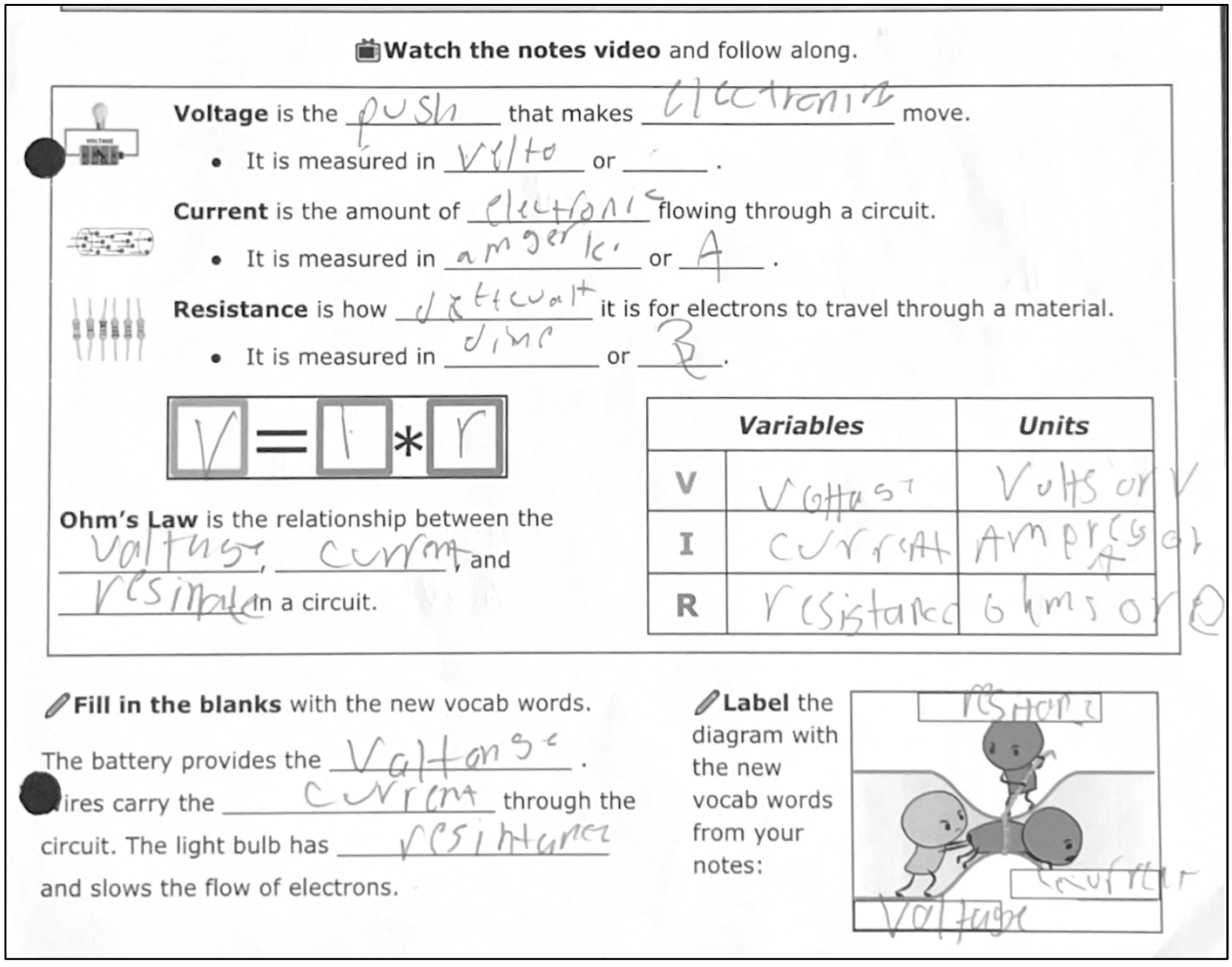
As Figure 4 illustrates, Kya (home language Arabic) chose to write her response in English but used direct wording from the closed captions in the teacher's instructional video on Canvas. The teacher felt this response was not demonstrative of the Kya's true comprehension of the material and asked her to retake the Mastery Check.

While I did not have the opportunity to ask Kya for her explanation of this interaction, my reflective journal noted that Kya had asked Ms. Franklin several questions but still seemed uncertain. My assumption, correct or incorrect, is that because Kya did not understand the teacher's response to her question, she decided to copy Ms. Franklin's own words from the instructional video (Reflective Journal, March 4, 2025). This example highlights subtle power dynamics that may discourage linguistic diversity and constrain students' understanding and authentic linguistic expression in academic contexts.

As evidenced by Figure 4, technology in the classroom also emerged as both supportive resources and sources of tension. Assignments, such as those depicted in Figure 5, consistently directed students to view instructional videos on iPads, featuring the option to enable closed captions translated into their home languages.

Figure 5

Isaiah's Unit 6 Notes Packet



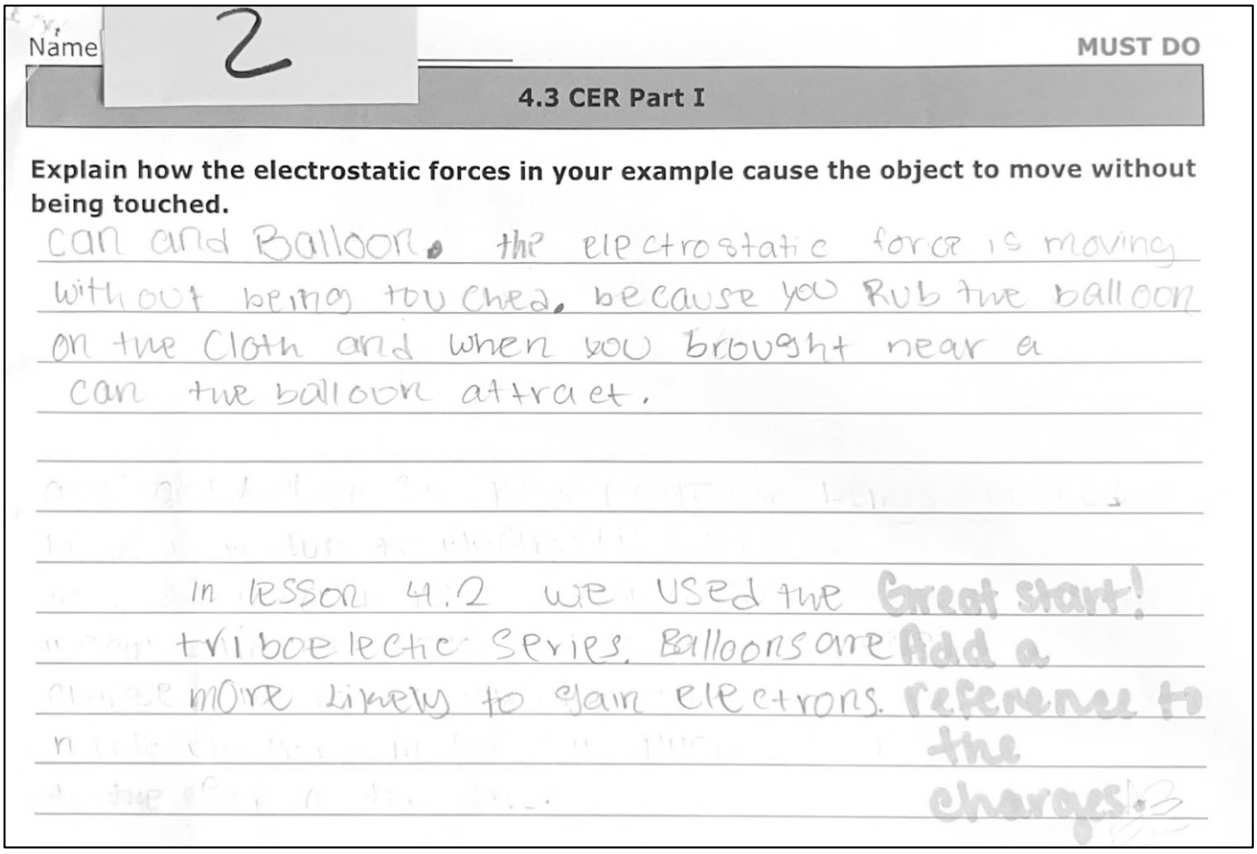
While potentially valuable, reliance on technology for translation purposes also suggested limitations in linguistic scaffolding within direct instruction, thereby placing additional cognitive and technological demands upon students.

The explicit focus on academic language within assignments created additional equity tensions. While vocabulary translation tasks aimed at strengthening multilingual connections, the

core academic tasks—such as guided notes and CER responses—were still primarily completed in English. For example, despite Ms. Franklin displaying the prompt and vocabulary words for the CER lesson in Swahili on the TV as students were completing their assignment, Colette still chose to complete her writing in English (Figure 7). Thus, despite opportunities for linguistic inclusivity, the expectation of proficiency in English-dominant academic language appeared to persistently influence student language choices, potentially marginalizing less proficient English users and reinforcing English-language norms within the classroom.

Figure 6

Colette's Unit 6 Notes Packet


Name 2

MUST DO

4.3 CER Part I

Explain how the electrostatic forces in your example cause the object to move without being touched.

can and Balloon. the electrostatic force is moving without being touched, because you Rub the balloon on the cloth and when you brought near a can the balloon attract.

In lesson 4.2 we used the triboelectric series. Balloons are more likely to gain electrons.

Great start! Add a reference to the charges!

Answering the Research Questions

The findings from this study provide nuanced answers to each of the research questions, drawing from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Across all three data sources, the themes of Building Classroom Community, Teacher as Reflective Practitioner, Language as Identity, and Equity Tensions emerged. These four themes served to answer the four research questions.

Research Question 1: What factors mold multilingual students' engagement with and use of translanguaging practices in an English medium instruction (EMI) classroom in the United States?

The analysis revealed that multilingual students strategically engage with translanguaging practices to affirm their identities and facilitate access to meaningful learning experiences. Drawing on theoretical understandings from translanguaging research (García & Wei, 2014) and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), students' selective and intentional language usage is framed not merely as a linguistic choice but as a culturally situated, identity-affirming practice. Multilingual students were particularly adept at navigating their language repertoires contextually, adapting their languaging choices to align with their audience's linguistic capabilities and preferences. This intentionality exemplifies translanguaging as a dynamic, situated practice deeply rooted in students' sociocultural experiences.

During interviews, multilingual students explicitly articulated their strategies for adjusting their language usage to meet the linguistic needs and expectations of their peers. Beyond mere accommodation, students emphasized that these decisions were also closely tied to their emotional and expressive capacities. For example, in a joint interview, Andres and Peter revealed that their selective language use—especially their preference for Spanish during social interactions—was directly connected to their capacity to authentically and accurately convey personal narratives and emotions. Peter explained the depth of linguistic expression available to them in Spanish, noting:

> "We grew up speaking more Spanish than English, so we have this open book of expressions we can use... In English, if I don't know how to say it, I have to try to explain it differently" (Interview 2, March 14, 2025).

This suggests translanguaging is a deeply affective and identity-laden process, where students leverage their full linguistic repertoire to achieve richer, more nuanced communication. Moreover, multilingual students demonstrated acute awareness of how their language choices served as crucial markers of personal and cultural identity, revealing language as both a personal asset and a reflection of broader societal pressures and power dynamics. Andres described his intentional choice of using English for emotionally charged conversations to maintain a sense of emotional separation, using language as a powerful emotional boundary. Such deliberate linguistic choices underscore the intricate interplay between emotional expression, identity management, and societal influences within translanguaging practices.

However, linguistic hierarchies and environmental power dynamics within the school environment significantly influenced multilingual students' engagement with translanguaging. Students whose home languages were dominant within the classroom environment, particularly Spanish speakers, felt more empowered to translanguage freely for both social and academic purposes. In contrast, students from less-represented language backgrounds exhibited noticeable reluctance or silence. When ML students with home languages of Arabic or Swahili did speak, it was always in English, illustrating how structural inequities and language hierarchies within educational settings (García & Wei, 2014) can impede the equitable engagement of students.

Ultimately, multilingual students' engagement with translanguaging practices emerges as a complex, strategically navigated process shaped by sociocultural factors, linguistic identity management, and systemic language hierarchies. Their linguistic choices and community-building efforts reflect not only pragmatic adjustments but also deeply embedded cultural practices and personal identity negotiations, highlighting the transformative potential and ongoing equity challenges inherent in translanguaging pedagogies.

Research Question 2: How do monolingual students engage with and experience Translanguaging Pedagogy in an English medium instruction (EMI) classroom in the United States?

The analysis revealed that monolingual students engage with translanguaging practices primarily through processes of social integration and norm internalization, deeply influenced by the highly multilingual and culturally diverse environment of their school. Although monolingual students did not directly participate in translanguaging as producers of multiple languages, they actively contributed to a classroom culture in which translanguaging was normalized, valued, and seamlessly embedded in daily interactions. Within this context, monolingual students engaged with peers across linguistic backgrounds without hesitation or disruption.

The fluidity of interactions reflects their internalization of translanguaging norms as a regular and unremarkable part of the learning environment. As AJ, succinctly stated, "They doing their business. I'm doing my business. People are going to go on with their day" (Interview 1, March 10, 2025). This normalization of multilingualism demonstrates a key element of community—influence—where diverse practices are not only accepted but expected as group norms (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Moreover, ML students with high degree of English proficiency acted as bridges or facilitators in multilingual interactions, demonstrating both awareness and appreciation for their peers' linguistic practices. Moments of casual, inclusive interaction fostered a sense of community identity and belonging.

Observational data showed that monolingual students regularly collaborated with multilingual peers in both academic and social activities. While their spoken contributions remained in English, they did not withdraw from or avoid interactions where other languages were present. This willingness to engage, even when not sharing the same linguistic repertoire, reflects a shared emotional connection through mutual respect and participation. When monolingual students expressed curiosity and respect for the multilingualism around them. This aspirational stance positions monolingual students as emergent allies in multilingual spaces, reinforcing their commitment to the collective identity of the classroom. Through their sustained interactions in a translanguaging-rich environment, monolingual students internalized the norms, values, and routines of a multilingual community, thereby becoming active participants in the construction of inclusive classroom discourse.

Importantly, while monolingual students were generally comfortable navigating multilingual spaces, they were not immune to the broader linguistic hierarchies and environmental power dynamics at play. Their preference or default use of English—even in mixed-language groups—reinforces the privileged position of English in EMI contexts. While monolingual students were largely supportive of their peers' translanguaging practices, their own limited engagement with additional languages may perpetuate existing hierarchies unless consciously disrupted by pedagogy.

Still, monolingual students' attitudes and behaviors offer promising insight into how translanguaging pedagogy can support community building and equity across linguistic backgrounds. As AJ emphasized, "[We are] kind of a translator, a helper…you know? because that's your friend, right?... I think it's kind of great that we're having students who's helping other students out." (Interview 1, March 10, 2025). Monolingual students' participation suggests that translanguaging spaces not only benefit multilingual students but also broaden monolingual students' cultural competence and empathy. In this way, the classroom becomes a shared space of mutual influence and growth, reflecting the sociocultural view of learning as collective and transformative.

Research Question 3: How does the teacher perceive multilingual students' interactions with and use of translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom?

The analysis revealed that Ms. Franklin perceives multilingual students as culturally and linguistically resourceful learners whose translanguaging practices are integral to both their academic success and personal identity development. Taking a strengths-based perspective, she recognizes linguistic flexibility is not a barrier to learning but as a powerful tool for meaning-making, engagement, and classroom participation. Ms. Franklin views her students' language choices as socially situated, cognitively rich, and pedagogically valuable.

Ms. Franklin shared that the most significant shift she has observed since implementing translanguaging pedagogy has been an increase in student engagement. Reflecting on her evolving practice, she explained:

> When they use their home languages… students are more engaged. Students who maybe I've had trouble getting to, I have tried to use more of their language, and then all of a sudden, they are putting more into... class, even if it's still difficult for them (Interview 1, February 25, 2025).

Her reflection highlights a key affordance of translanguaging: its ability to create access points for students who may otherwise remain on the margins of participation. Her comment underscores that increased participation is not necessarily tied to ease, but to emotional safety, linguistic recognition, and a sense of ownership in the learning process. This shift suggests that when students are permitted to draw from their full linguistic repertoires invest more deeply in their learning—despite the continued presence of academic challenges. Translanguaging does not simplify content; rather, it equips students with additional resources to use while learning.

Ms. Franklin's responsiveness to student language use was evident. During small-group work and discussions, she frequently circulated to provide feedback and assistance to students, encouraging them to continue using their home language while she responded in English. This bidirectional language negotiation reflects her respect for students' linguistic agency and her role as a facilitator of meaning-making, rather than an enforcer of monolingual norms.

In structuring classroom collaboration, Ms. Franklin actively draws on students' multilingualism as an academic resource. She routinely identifies "language experts" for each content topic—students who have already passed a Mastery Check and can support peers in their shared language. Additionally, Ms. Franklin integrates multilingualism into curricular tasks for monolingual as well as multilingual students, inviting monolingual students to engage in translating academic vocabulary into a language they are interested in learning or one spoken by a friend (Observation, March 24, 2025). This inclusive approach not only supported multilingual students academically but also created opportunities for cultural exchange and empathy-building among all students.

Beyond pedagogy, Ms. Franklin expressed a nuanced understanding of the cultural significance embedded in students' language practices. She acknowledged that students' language choices were often tied to their emotional experiences and identity negotiations. For example, during one observation Andres arrived with tears in his eyes. Ms. Franklin pulled him aside to check on him, and when he responded that he did not feel like talking about it, she asked if he wanted to talk to his math teacher who spoke Spanish. He took her up on the offer and returned to class 10 minutes later in a seemingly better mood (Observation March 13, 2025).

By allowing students to express themselves in the language that felt most authentic, she affirmed their cultural backgrounds and responded to their emotional needs. This awareness positions her not just as an instructor but as a culturally responsive practitioner who sees the classroom as a space for holistic development.

Research Question 4: How does the teacher perceive monolingual students' interactions with translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom?

The analysis of observation and interviews revealed that Ms. Franklin perceives translanguaging not only as a strategy to support multilingual learners but also as a transformative pedagogical approach that enriches the experiences of monolingual students. Grounded in her belief that language diversity enhances community and academic equity, Ms. Franklin sees translanguaging pedagogy as a tool for broadening monolingual students' perspectives, promoting empathy, and fostering deeper academic engagement. Her perspective is informed by both personal experience and a sociocultural understanding of learning as situated within dynamic social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Ms. Franklin articulated that translanguaging provides monolingual students with opportunities to appreciate linguistic diversity and develop inclusive mindsets. She reflected, "I think that also a lot of our students... would say that they want to learn another language because of their experiences... in a way that I don't think in other circumstances, maybe they would" (Interview 1, February 25, 2025). Her view positions translanguaging pedagogy as an equity-driven practice, offering all students—not just multilingual ones—access to diverse forms of knowledge and interpersonal connection.

Ms. Franklin's approach is deeply rooted in her own life experiences (Interview 1, February 25, 2025). She seeks to inspire monolingual students engage with linguistic diversity from a place of respect and curiosity rather than discomfort or dominance.

In practice, Ms. Franklin integrates these values into her classroom by modeling empathy and dismantling assumptions about language use. When monolingual students question whether multilingual peers understand the teacher, she redirects their thinking:

> "Students who speak only English may say, 'They don't understand you'…
> and then I'll be like, 'No, they understand me'... you don't know how much
> they understand" (Interview 1, February 25, 2025).

This explicit reframing of linguistic assumptions challenges monolingual students to develop a more nuanced and equitable understanding of language competence. By encouraging monolingual students to be attentive to the multilingual nature of their learning environment, she equips them with the tools to become more reflective, empathetic, and adaptive learners. Her classroom becomes a space where language serves not just as a medium of instruction, but as a bridge to cultural understanding and social cohesion.

While monolingual students may not participate in translanguaging pedagogy in the same way as ML students, Ms. Franklin perceives monolingual students' interactions with translanguaging practices as a critical opportunity for growth. Her pedagogy invites monolingual learners into a multilingual world, helping them develop a more complex understanding of communication, identity, and learning. In doing so, she constructs a classroom environment where all students, regardless of linguistic background, are positioned as contributors to a collective, culturally sustaining community.

Implications and Conclusion

The findings of this study offer several implications for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to support multilingual. At its core, this study reinforces the assertion that translanguaging is not simply a strategy for multilingual learners, but a critical pedagogy for cultivating inclusive and equitable learning environments (García & Wei, 2014; Vogel & García,

2017). When translanguaging practices are thoughtfully integrated into the fabric of classroom life, they can be a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy useful for validating students' linguistic identities, supporting academic development, and disrupting entrenched language hierarchies. These implications are especially relevant in linguistically diverse U.S. public schools where dual language programs may be impractical.

The first implication centers on the role of translanguaging in fostering classroom community. Learning is socially mediated through language (Vygotsky, 1978), and translanguaging enhances this by allowing students to engage in co-construction of knowledge across languages (Bryzzheva, 2002). Empirical research supports this dynamic: incorporating students' first languages improves ML students' confidence, engagement, and participation in the classroom (Martin-Beltrán, 2017; Rajendram, 2023). Furthermore, collaborative routines that normalize translanguaging bolster academic success and social-emotional development (Alsbury et al., 2020). Therefore, practitioners might adopt translanguaging not only as an instructional tool, but as a foundational element of community-centered classroom design.

Second, findings emphasize the educator's pivotal role in facilitating and sustaining translanguaging spaces. As previous research has shown, teacher reflection, flexibility, and intentionality are central to the success of translanguaging pedagogy (Tai & Wong, 2023; Yuan & Yang, 2023). Ms. Franklin's practices demonstrate that translanguaging can be embedded in everyday instruction without compromising rigor (Kang, 2022; Martin & Strom, 2016). Teacher preparation programs should equip educators to critically examine their language ideologies and respond to students' linguistic needs through culturally responsive practices (Koubek & Wasta, 2023; Pawan et al., 2023; Solís et al., 2024). Situated learning experiences within diverse communities offer essential preparation for working with ML students and should be integrated into preservice training.

Third, findings underscore the affective and social functions of students' languaging. Language functions not only as a tool for academic communication, but also as a means of negotiating emotion, identity, and familial ties (Corella, 2022; McConnochie, 2021). Creating spaces for students to use their full linguistic repertoires promotes emotional well-being and cultural continuity (Darwin & Evizariza, 2024). Educational leaders should thus embrace culturally sustaining pedagogies that validate students' heritage languages and recognize the integral link between language, identity, and self-expression.

Finally, the findings bring attention to the enduring structural inequities that persist in EMI classrooms, even those that explicitly support translanguaging. Students' use of their home languages is shaped by broader linguistic hierarchies and institutional constraints. (Aoyama, 2020; Zhang-Wu, 2021). In this case, Spanish and English were more readily used and affirmed than Swahili or Arabic, creating uneven opportunities for participation and self-expression. Student silence can be a strategic and protective response to these inequities (Mizell & McCoy, 2022). The limited classroom participation of students with less represented home languages should be understood as a response to environmental power dynamics—an act of resilience within a linguistically stratified context rather than a lack of engagement.

Overall, these findings suggest a need for educators to implement intentional and culturally responsive strategies that uplift students whose languages are less represented in the classroom. This includes assigning visible value to all languages, explicitly addressing linguistic hierarchies, and leveraging student and family linguistic knowledge as classroom assets. However, individual teachers cannot dismantle systemic inequities on their own; broader institutional systems must adapt. Research has shown that dominant policies and discourses in education continue to marginalize non-English languages and uphold English as the default language of academic legitimacy (Aleman, 2023; Sah & Uysal, 2025). Schools and districts must critically re-evaluate

their policies, curricula, and language expectations to move toward greater linguistic equity and justice (Sah & Uysal, 2025).

Ethical Considerations

In any research involving human participants, privacy, confidentiality, deception and consent are of the utmost importance. To address ethical issues embedded in social science research, I compiled with all research requirements of the University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Science Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) and the review board of the school district in which I collected data. In accordance with SSIRB requirements, I completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) course training and an IRB approval form (Approval #442588). All participants were fully informed of the research purpose and design before agreeing to participate.

Publisher's note

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