

matsol



# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners

Vol. 46, No. 2 Fall/Winter 2023-2024



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## ON THE COVER

Melanie González in México during her Fulbright-García Robles exchange.

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Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners

Vol. 46, No.2 Fall/Winter 2023-2024

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# President's Message

**D**EAR MATSOL COMMUNITY,  
I hope that the transition to the new calendar year has been full of rest, good health, and joy - and to our MATSOL members that also celebrate the Lunar New Year, wishing you all a happy Year of the Dragon!

In the winter 2023 *Currents* issue I wrote about the *A is for Bee* picture book and how that was a text that pushes to think about language, alphabet books, and how to reframe what it means to center the ways multilingual learners think about and use language. In keeping with that tradition, I'd like to highlight another book, *Soñadores / Dreamers*, written and illustrated by Yuji Morales. This book tells an immigration story about a mother and daughter, and it is a text I love to use with students and educators of all grade levels. I recently used the Spanish and English versions of this text to model a bilingual read aloud with a group of middle and high school ESL teachers.

On one of the first pages, you see the two main characters looking down from a mountain onto a new city and the text reads "Y cuando llegamos al otro lado, sedientos, sobrecognitos, sin poder volver atrás, nos convertimos en inmigrantes. And when we made it to the other side, thirsty, in awe, unable to go back, we became immigrants." I have done an interactive read aloud with this text countless times with multilingual learners, teacher candidates, and practicing teachers, and I always pause on this page and ask, "how do you think the mother and daughter feel at this moment?" When I asked this question most recently, one teacher responded, "excited and hopeful" and another responded, "nervous and scared." Several weeks later, I'm still thinking about that discussion and how it is a good example about how a picture as simple as two people looking out over a mountain can be interpreted so differently depending on personal experiences. And this idea extends into our work as educators and advocates: What experiences shape our perspectives and how we approach our work as educators and advocates? What are ways we can be more mindful of the experiences and perspectives of our students and the communities we engage with? Whose perspectives and experiences are we centering in our work?

Speaking of experiences, if you've participated in any of our recent SIG events or attended our conference then I hope you know these activities are shaped and led by our members who have volunteered their time, experience, and

expertise with MATSOL this past year. Thank you to all our MATSOL volunteers who keep our community engaged with each other and beyond! If you'd like to be part of the experience shaping or just be more involved in the MATSOL community, I encourage you to check out and join the work our SIGs have been up to - lots of exciting initiatives happening that you can read about in the [SIG reports section starting on page 6](#). You may also want to consider submitting an application to join the MATSOL Board of Directors. Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who submitted a proposal to our upcoming conference and to all our proposal reviewers – thanks to all of you, we are looking forward to an excellent 2024 conference this spring, where I hope to see you either in person or online!

Reading *MATSOL Currents* will help you keep abreast of these events and learn more about the teaching, community, and scholarly work of our members. In this issue, be sure to check out [Melanie González's report on her Fulbright exchange experience in México on page 14](#). If you are interested in the education of refugees, [Lugyi No's description of his work with mobile education in Myanmar can be found on page 22](#) and [Iuliia Fakhrutdinova's ideas for a unit plan for refugee-background students on page 44](#). Finally, [Laura Hamman-Ortiz and Kelly Cooney share tools for implementing a translanguaging approach in the classroom in their article on page 51](#). As always, please consider submitting your own story ideas to the editor at [currents@matsol.org](mailto:currents@matsol.org).

To the MATSOL community, thank you for all you do in support of multilingual learners, families, and communities.

In pursuit of equity and justice, Chris. 

**Chris Montecillo Leider**

[cmleider@matsol.org](mailto:cmleider@matsol.org)

# Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

**M**ATSOL offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which, except for the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC), are open to all members free of charge. For more information on the SIGs and to sign up, please visit the SIGs website <https://www.matsol.org/member-groups>. Here are reports on recent and upcoming SIG activities from the following SIGs:

- Advocacy
- Community College ESL Faculty
- Educators of Color
- Emerging Scholars Circle
- ESL Co-Teaching (NEW)
- ESL Unit Developers
- Instructional Coaches
- Teacher Educators
- MELLC

## ADVOCACY SIG

The Advocacy Special Interest Group brings together educators who want to learn about and get support for advocacy at local, state, and federal levels to advocate for Multilingual Learners (MLLs), their families, their teachers, and the field of TESOL & bilingual education.

For the Spring of 2024, the Advocacy SIG plans to host exciting meetings surrounding MLL students' and teachers' concerns and the MLL education in MA schools. The rise of book ban challenges is alarming and should concern all teachers, but MLL teachers should be at the forefront of the fight for all voices to be heard, read, and seen. Look forward to our SIG meetings and possible webi-

nars with special guest speakers and panelists!

For more information about the Advocacy SIG, visit our web page <https://www.matsol.org/advocacy-sig> to get up to date information for when we meet and sign up for the Advocacy Special Interest Group e-list.

**Steering Committee: Kelly Mowers and Katie Peterson**

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY SIG**

The Community College Interest Group is engaged in working with members (Art Esposito) from the Board of Higher Education to standardize ESL course curricula across the 15 community colleges in Massachusetts. The goal is to create uniform outcomes to define credit ESL courses that meet graduation and transfer credit guidelines in accordance with the Mass Transfer Compact. In December we held an open house to share with participants the proposed project and to request their input in creating the procedures for such an undertaking.

Our task is to launch the system to gather data and collaborate on standardized outcomes for our ESL credit-bearing courses across our state-wide system. We welcome input from our colleagues as we continue to develop this important task to bring ESL courses under the umbrella of the Mass Transfer Project. We hope you will join us this year in upcoming MATSOL open houses. For more information, please visit our website <https://www.matsol.org/community-college-esl>.

**Steering Committee: Juanita Brunelle, Teresa Cheung, Clarissa Codrington, Eileen Kelley, Anne Shull, and Jennifer Valdez**

### **EDUCATORS OF COLOR SIG**

The Educators of Color SIG is a collaborative network of educators of color. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month, in the afternoon. We provide a space for our members to support one another, talk through the difficult issues that affect BIPOC students and educators, as well as share resources and strategies that work well in our various communities of learning.

This school year, we spent some time unpacking ways our members could continue sharing commonalities and resources. Going forward, we would like to dedicate some of our monthly meetings to include different members sharing aspects of their culture. For our January meeting we learned about aspects of Haitian culture. One of our own members, Méritès Abelard, shared the cuisine and history of Haiti. For upcoming meetings, the co-chairs of this SIG, Yuiko Shi-

mazu will share her Japanese culture, and Lonamae Shand will share her Jamaican culture. We hope many other EOC members will join us. We are also looking forward to other volunteers signing up to share in our future meetings. Let us share about what makes us such a diverse group!

At the MATSOL Conference 2024, we would like to continue to provide an opportunity for EOC and white allies to connect and share best practices to support each other. If you are interested in collaborating to co-facilitate the session with us, please let us know!

We also continue to encourage our members to assume leadership roles in MATSOL and within their communities. For more information, please visit our web page at [www.matsol.org/educators-of-color-sig](http://www.matsol.org/educators-of-color-sig)

### **Steering Committee: Yuiko Shimazu and Lonamae Shand**

#### **EMERGING SCHOLARS CIRCLE SIG**

The Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is open to undergraduate and graduate students worldwide who are interested in social justice-related research on equity, diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. The Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is a bridging space for students in scholarly research and undergraduate/graduate school coursework. ESC SIG meets online once a month, on the fourth Thursday of each month.

During last year's meeting, we decided to organize more interactive activities to encourage the active participation of our MATSOL and SIG members. So, this year, we chose to operate with the theme "Collaborations and Communities" and organized a panel of speakers to explore how researchers and practitioners collaborate with communities of diverse backgrounds.

We had three online meetings this Fall semester. In the first meeting (September), the steering committee met to make plans for the Fall semester and decided on the thematic approach to engage with our SIG members. We devoted the second meeting (October) to examining "Do's and Don'ts" in editing, reviewing, and publishing textbooks for culturally and linguistically diverse teachers, scholars, students, and other communities. We had four speakers who shared their first-hand experience with our SIG members. In our third meeting, which took place in December, the steering committee invited another panel of four speakers who shared their expertise and knowledge on ethical aspects of research



work while collaborating with communities. To attract and engage our members with more meaningful topics, we announced a call for webinar proposals (<https://forms.gle/LsTxY4Zg9pieWn66>).

In the following semester, we will continue to explore subtle aspects of collaborative work with diverse communities by inviting more guest speakers and organizing webinars. For more information, please visit our SIG page <https://matsol.memberclicks.net/emerging-scholars-circle-sig>.

**Steering Committee: Nasiba Norova, Iuliia Fakhrutdinova, and Vanessa QuintanaSarría**

### **ESL CO-TEACHING SIG !NEW!**

With many districts moving toward inclusive practices and creative approaches to providing high-quality instruction to all students, particularly multilingual learners, many districts and schools are exploring co-teaching practices for English Learner Education. Although co-teaching can be a highly effective model for providing ESL instruction to multilingual learners, there are many factors that must be considered. If certain aspects of the model are overlooked, it can result in ineffective practices and an inaccurate determination that the model does not work.

The focus of our new ESL Co-Teaching Special Interest Group is to learn about what works within the co-teaching partnership, and specifically what is needed for co-teaching ESL. The goal of the ESL Co-Teaching SIG is to review, share, and promote best practices for the organization, implementation, and sustainability of co-teaching models for ESL in order to inform the schools, districts, and state leaders.

**Nathan Couto** and **Julie Miller** comprise the steering committee of the ESL Co-Teaching SIG. Both of them are currently serving in the role of Curriculum, Data, & Assessment Manager for English Learner Education at



the district level within the New Bedford Public Schools.

Nathan Couto's previous roles include those of an elementary school teacher, ESL teacher, literacy & language coach, and a school-level administrator. As an ESL teacher, Nathan co-taught with several classroom teachers, and after becoming a coach, he coordinated co-teaching practices for a school of approximately 750 students, of which about 250 were classified as ELs. Nathan is passionate about his work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and the impact strong co-teaching practices have on student learning outcomes.

Julie Miller has served in the roles of an early childhood teacher, ESL teacher, and ESL Teaching and Learning Specialist (instructional coach). Julie became interested in co-teaching when she was in the role of an ESL Teaching and Learning Specialist within a school that was piloting the model within the district. Working with Nathan, she has developed and delivered professional development and participated in coaching sessions to further develop teachers' skills in the area of co-teaching. Julie is passionate about her work with the New Bedford Public School community and hopes to inspire others to learn more about co-teaching.

The southeastern urban public school district of New Bedford currently has a little over 5,000 students identified as multilingual learners with about 4,000 officially designated as English Learners or Former English Learners. As a high-incidence district, New Bedford Public Schools has formed programs to meet the specific needs of certain populations such as newcomers, SLIFE, and Long-Term ELs. Part of the Newcomer Program model involves full-day co-teaching in grades 3-5 with one ESL teacher and one general education teacher.

Continuously learning about and supporting best practices for multilingual learners is a priority for both Julie and Nathan and for their school district as it is for many teachers and leaders in the MATSOL organization. Therefore, we are excited to invite others to join us as thought partners within the ESL Co-Teaching SIG. The SIG's webpage will be created soon.

**Steering committee: Nathan Couto and Julie Miller**

### **ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS SIG**

**Q:** What's worse than being a Dallas Cowboy football player at home getting trampled by the Green Bay Packers 48-24 in the 4th quarter?

**A:** Not having a SIG to go to for knowledge, support, and a good time!

A dedicated group of professional SIG players found their calling this year with the ESL Unit Developers. They kicked off their season with four virtual meetings this fall on the 4th Wednesdays of the month (adjusted for holidays). Approximately 20 members attended our games, with numerous fans on the sidelines. Friendly breakout rooms, summer sideline stints, and writing workouts were de rigueur for all involved. These SIG pros created a math unit and a Massachusetts social studies unit worthy of MCU status. Upcoming events for this spring include trainings in applying the Massachusetts DESE Next Generation ESL Tools & Resources, such as the ESL Curriculum Modules and the Collaboration Tool, as well as a continuation of our collaborative unit development. If you like to improve your stats in professional ESL unit development, this hard-working SIG is for you! Questions? Visit our MATSOL website at <https://www.matsol.org/esl-unit-developers-sig> or contact Coach Jessica Pulzetti at [jpulzetti@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:jpulzetti@arlington.k12.ma.us)

**Steering Committee: Jessica Pulzetti, Liana Parsons, Kerry DeJesus, Susannah DiMauro, and Viviana Martinez**

### **INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES SIG**

The Instructional Coaches SIG is a forum for PreK-12 instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and coordinators. The goal of the Instructional Coaches SIG is to facilitate collaboration of instructional coaches across Massachusetts in order to improve coaching systems and strategies that support General Education and ESL teachers in meeting the needs of multilingual learners.

The Problem of Practice Protocol is a staple at every meeting. The protocol encourages coaches to think more expansively about a specific and concrete dilemma. Using the protocol helps coaches to develop a capacity to see and describe issues and encourages participants to understand and collaborate on possible solutions. Each month's Problem of Practice discussion focuses on a particular topic such as the roles and responsibilities of being a coach, the support of newcomers and teachers who work with newcomers, co-teaching and the (mis)use of translating in the classroom.

For more information about the Instructional Coaches SIG, visit our website <https://www.matsol.org/instructional-coaches-sig> to get up to date information for when we meet and sign up for the Instructional Coaches "Special Interest Group" e-list.

**Steering Committee: Ivone Spencer and Mary Kennedy**

## TEACHER EDUCATION SIG

The Teacher Educators Special Interest Group provides a space for members who work in teacher education in any context to collaborate on issues and advocacy relating to the preparation and support of pre- and in-service teachers of multilingual learners. This fall, we began work on creating a lesson plan template that reflects our current and best practices in lesson planning and delivery for English language instruction. Our intention behind designing this template is to scaffold the planning process for pre- and in-service ESL and SEI teachers that can be flexible enough to be utilized in a variety of settings.

We plan to continue to flesh out the template in the Spring 2024 term and hold discussions around how to assess and provide actionable feedback to teacher candidates utilizing this lesson plan template to deliver their lessons. We will also begin developing our SIG sessions for the 2024 MATSOL Conference where we intend to extend our work on the lesson planning process into a discussion on professional skills, dispositions, and expectations of a new teacher on “day one versus year 3” of their career.

The Teacher Educator SIG meets online once a month throughout the academic year, on the third Thursday of each month from 3:30-5:00 pm. Reminders and agenda are sent out via the Teacher Education e-list. All MATSOL members are welcome, but attendees must be registered members to access the meeting link. For more information, visit <https://www.matsol.org/teacher-educators!>

**Steering Committee: Rachel Kramer Theodorou and Melanie González**




# MELLC Update

By Mary DeSimone, MELLC Facilitator

**T**HIS FALL the MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) held three meetings focusing on pertinent topics, networking, and sharing among members. Our October meeting was in person at Fitchburg State where Lynn D'Agostino, Assistant Education Professor & Graduate Program Chair, gave a warm welcome. Catherine Ramirez Mejia from MIRA Coalition then gave us an update on Best Practices and Resources to Support New Arrival Students. She reviewed information on new arrivals data, humanitarian programs and immigrant rights and resources. Jessica Gonzalez shared ideas on supporting SLIFE students and programming and Mary Bridget Burnes joined as a special guest to discuss the MA SLIFE Community of Practice. We wrapped up the morning session with Boni-esther Enquist who continued facilitating our discussions around newcomers and gave us a taste of the MATSOL Newcomer Course.

In November, we met virtually and had three strategic networking breakout sessions around topics requested by our members including family engagement, dually identified students, EL success plans, and translation tools. Participants both shared ideas and asked questions to learn how other EL leaders across the state planned programming and implemented initiatives. MELLC members can access this [Padlet](#) to review resources and questions shared during breakout sessions.

We once again met in person at Fitchburg State in December and were welcomed by Nancy Murray, Dean of the School of Education. Our morning focused on implementing the Blueprint for EL Success. We explored the numerous implementation resources on DESE's website in groups and then groups discussed the implications in different incidence-level districts. Christina Manos (Shrewsbury), Kate Lyons Mailloux (Marshfield), and Maria Gutierrez-Rey (Lawrence) graciously shared their experiences implementing the Blueprint. After lunch, Boni-esther Enquist shifted our focus to ACCESS preparation centered on the question "How to prepare ELs for ACCESS?" She shared both a comprehensive document with suggestions and best practices for preparing ELs for ACCESS and a customizable mini-unit to prepare students.

MELLC offers a great opportunity for EL leaders to learn, reflect, and share ideas and resources with peers who face similar challenges as they work for the improvement of EL education. We look forward to continuing to support their efforts to promote equity and excellence in EL education! 

# My Fulbright-García Robles Story

**Melanie González**

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**M**Y INTEREST IN LANGUAGES has always been a part of me. My family is Puerto Rican-American and so we have always been surrounded by multiple languages and cultures. Based on these experiences with friends and family and growing up loving languages and different cultures, I chose to make working with multilingual students and teachers my career. It is largely because of my family and friends that inspired me to apply for the Fulbright-García Robles U.S. Scholar in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) award in México. My goals were to learn more about language teachers' reflective practices from colleagues, scholars, and students in Guanajuato Capital. I also wished to experience living, working, teaching, and researching in a new culture as well as increase my academic Spanish language skills.

The Fulbright Program in México is jointly administered by a dedicated team called COMEXUS (México-United States Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange) and the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Fulbright-García Robles scholarships and grants support both Mexican and American students, researchers, and professors to carry out postgraduate studies, research stays, teaching, and professional programs in the US and México.

My duties as a Fulbright-García Robles U.S. Scholar in TEFL included formal academic responsibili-



At the official Fulbright-COMEXUS Welcome Reception in Ciudad de México



Working at la Universidad de Guanajuato

ties such as co-teaching and guest lecturing in classes at my host institution the Universidad de Guanajuato, carrying out a research project in collaboration with professors here, and being available to faculty and students should they wish me to assist with teaching or other projects. But it also includes serving as a cultural ambassador from the USA, meaning I was expected to participate in community events, share my experiences as an American with the Mexican people, and experience México's culture and history to bring more cultural awareness back to my classroom and community in Salem.

Some of the activities I have participated in outside of my work as a scholar included volunteering for México City's





U.S. Embassy when its staff came to Guanajuato for the 51st Festival Internacional Cervantino. Guanajuato hosts this annual arts and culture festival annually where they invite a country of honor and a Mexican state of honor to show off their arts to Latin America. It just so happened the USA was the invited country of honor this year and so it was a really great experience to participate formally with the embassy team and represent my country.

I also attended a Lucha Libre at the historic Arena México in México City with the other Fulbright-García Robles grantees in this year's cohort. It



At the Casa Ben Franklin/USA House for Cervantino



At the Luchas in México City



was quite entertaining and you could feel that you were experiencing something uniquely Mexican in watching the stories of epic battles rooted sometimes in Mexican folklore happening in this ostentatious event!

In 2010, UNESCO inscribed Mexican cuisine on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultur-



Enmoladas de pollo, chicken enchiladas with a rich mole poured over top. Mole is Mexico's famous savory chocolate sauce.



Tapetes de La Muerte

al Heritage of Humanity. From crop to table, practices for planting, harvesting, and preparing are rooted in thousands of years of indigenous practices. Ingredients used in the food like corn, beans, avocado, tomatoes, and cocoa are native to México and are full of deep, cultural symbolism. As an example of this symbolism, you can find these same ingredients not just in the food but also in artwork, like in the elaborate and colorful *tapetes*, or artistic mats, laid out on the streets for Día de Los Muertos. You can see an artist invited me to help create a *tapete*! Such a special experience for me.

I was also able to experience two major holidays during my stay here in Guanajuato: Día





Tapetes de La Muerte

ed film *Coco* that brought Día de los Muertos to life for audiences. What struck me most about experiencing the holiday, is that it does not just serve to remember and honor loved ones who passed by creating *altares de muertos* that lay out *ofrendas*, or offerings of those ancestors' favorite things, but friends here also shared that the day serves to help children to not fear death through these otherworldly connec-

de la Independencia (September 16) and Día de los Muertos (November 1-2). The state of Guanajuato played an important role in México's independence movement, being the site of one of the first battles. Just like in the U.S., México's Independence Day is celebrated with fireworks and then a recreation of "*El Grito*."

Sites and landmarks in the city of Guanajuato served as inspiration for Disney's film makers in their animat-



Catrina during the Día de los Muertos parade





Catrín during the Día de los Muertos parade

tions and beautiful Catrinas and Catrines dancing in the streets.

Lastly, I cannot speak about my time in Guanajuato without mentioning how the city itself and its people left an imprint on my heart. The landscape is quite challenging, with an altitude of 2022 meters or 6634 feet, its cool, dry mountain air, and ruggedly beautiful landscape. Navigating the city is like stepping back in time – Google maps will not always help with the

winding, narrow, and often steep *callejones* some of which you can only reach by foot, motorcycle, or horse! However, you will not find more positive and relaxed people who embrace the unique landscape of their city.

The people are friendly with generous hearts. My landlady made sure I knew the goings on of the neighborhood, students and colleagues made sure to include me in social events, and new friends were



Elaborate Altar de Muertos

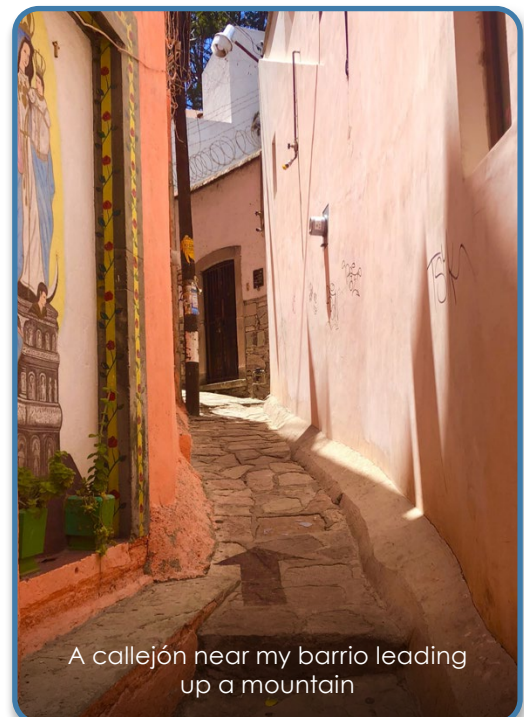




View of Guanajuato, capital city of Guanajuato State

always down to help me check items off my México bucket list like find the best *tamales*, buy *huaraches* (Mexican leather sandals), and use Mexican slang like *órale* correctly! And when I felt a little homesick, they rallied around me. For example, three friends came to my apartment to paint mini pumpkins for Halloween, knowing how big of a holiday it is in my hometown of Salem!

This Fulbright-García Robles experience has been transformative in learning who I am not just as a language teacher educator but about myself as a bilingual and bicultural Latina. I have witnessed, experienced, and listened to so many stories of how language is so inextricably tied to culture and identity. As



A callejón near my barrio leading up a mountain






Our calabacitas for Halloween

I return to my work at home in Salem, my biggest takeaway is that culturally and linguistically affirming instruction does not lie solely in a set of classroom-ready strategies. Instead, it involves the teacher taking the time to truly explore these inextricable ties between language, culture, and identity because in the center of the Venn diagram of these constructs lies truly transformative language learning. Through this deep work, the classroom strategies will come more naturally.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Melanie González, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of ESL and Literacy in both the English and Secondary and Higher Education Departments at Salem State University. She is also the Graduate Chairperson for the Secondary and Higher Education Department and Faculty Fellow for Global Engagement. She currently co-leads MATSOL's Teacher Educator SIG. 



# Resilience and Adaptability: Mobile Education in Conflict-Affected Myanmar

**Lugyi No**

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**THIS CASE STUDY INVESTIGATES** mobile education in the conflict-ridden context of Pekon Township, Myanmar, following the 2021 military coup. Through interviews, and focused group discussions involving educators and stakeholders, it reveals the resilience of educators who confront a multitude of challenges. Psychological distress, financial constraints, and limited access to support and training hinder their ability to provide quality education, particularly affecting volunteer teachers. Students also face significant barriers, from forced displacement to the absence of resources. Despite these difficulties, teachers adapt their methods, emphasizing critical thinking and community enrichment. Younger teachers have taken on leadership roles, marking a shift in traditional hierarchy. The study highlights a community-driven approach, emphasizing adaptability and innovation, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and organizations operating in conflict-affected regions.

## INTRODUCTION

Children in conflict-affected regions face significant obstacles to access to education due to the disruptive effects of conflicts, such as violence, forced displacement, and political unrest. This research provides an in-depth analysis of multiple obstacles faced by teachers who provide education in such difficult situations. It focuses primarily on a mobile education program in Pekon Township, located in the South Shan State of Myanmar, where according to the Board of Education, teachers have demonstrated remarkable resilience in running over 80 community schools teaching over 12,000 students. I use surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions to demonstrate the intricate array of issues and challenges that teachers face.

## BACKGROUND

Millions of children worldwide who live in conflict areas lack access to basic education due to violence, displacement, and political instability (Prasad & Prasad, 2009). These children, typically referred to as “invisible” victims of conflict, face numerous obstacles that hinder their educational progress. They have been removed from their homes, separated from their families, and exposed to traumatic events, which all result in lasting emotional pain.

Myanmar is a country known for its political instability and violence. On February 1, 2021, the military staged a coup against a popularly elected party, based on alleged voter fraud. Consequently, millions of people protested across the nation, demanding the return of civilian leadership. The military junta responded with extreme force, resulting in numerous casualties, injuries, and damage to property. This event, coupled with longstanding conflicts between the military and various rebel groups, led to mass displacements, significantly hindering access to education for students. The Institute for Strategy and Policy (2023) estimated that two million individuals, including school-age children, were forcibly displaced by violence and insecurity. Many parents have lost trust in the junta and its control over the education system. Some have stopped sending their children to junta-operated schools, while others have sought alternative educational avenues, such as schools administered by the shadow National Unity Government (NUG).

Before the coup, Myanmar had made significant advancements in education, enrolling more than 9.2 million students in KG-12 programs for the 2019-2020 academic year. However, only 2.3 million students could continue their education, representing a stunning decline in enrollment (Eleven Media Myanmar, 2023). Additionally, an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 university students actively joined the civil disobedience movement by refusing to go back to school (Institute for Strategy and Policy, 2023).

The shadow NUG emerged in response to the political crisis following the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 (Burmese, 2023). Recognizing the urgent need for democratic leadership, inclusivity, and international support, the NUG was established as an alternative government representing the aspirations of diverse ethnic and political groups. As part of its mission, the NUG focused on education as a fundamental aspect of governance, swiftly setting up its own schools across the country. By providing educational continuity and quality in the midst of political turmoil, the NUG aimed to rebuild trust in the education system and offered a reliable alternative to junta-controlled schools, fostering hope for Myanmar's

students in challenging times.

Pekon is a township located in Myanmar, specifically within the Taunggyi District of the Shan State. According to the 2014 census, Pekon had a total population of 103,590 residents in an area of 2,073 square kilometers. The township is renowned for its scenic beauty, with Inle Lake, Taunggyi, and Kakku Pagodas serving as prominent tourist attractions. Gender distribution is nearly balanced, with males comprising 49.5% and females 50.5% of the population. The urbanization rate in Pekon stands at 16%, with 84% of the population residing in rural areas (ReliefWeb, 2015). According to Open Development Mekong (n.d.), Pekon comprises 7 township area wards and 12 village tracts, totaling 211 villages. The township's education landscape includes 211 basic education schools, comprising 17 high schools, 15 middle schools, 162 primary schools, 13 preschools, and 4 monastic schools, staffed by 1,308 teachers in total providing access to education for over 30,000 students. Notably, Pekon boasts a commendable overall literacy rate of 81%.

Following the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, significant changes swept through Pekon Township in Shan State. Initially, peaceful protests arose in response to the coup, but the military's forceful crackdown escalated matters, leading to violent conflicts. Those actively engaged in the Civil Disobedience Movement, along with protestors and students who had taken prominent roles in these demonstrations, were arrested and subjected to torture. This surge in violence had a profound impact on Pekon Township, causing clashes, airstrikes, and artillery fire that made the region increasingly unsafe, especially for children. These events, coupled with the division of control between the military and revolutionary armed groups, significantly affected the educational landscape in Pekon Township.

On June 1, 2021, when the State Administration Council, also known as the military junta, issued an order for schools to resume classes throughout the country, not a single child in Pekon Township attended. This was because parents had decided not to send their children to schools controlled by the military junta, expressing their opposition with the slogan "No need for military slave education." According to the Board of Education Pekon Facebook Page (2021), more than 800 teachers in the area remained committed to the nationwide strike campaign known as the Civil Disobedience Movement. Those teachers who were not part of the movement were reassigned to different locations by the State Administration Council, rather than staying in Pekon. As a result, none of the



schools in the area were officially able to reopen. Some parents who supported the military sent their children to schools in areas not affected by conflict, while others hired teachers to provide home schooling. Some parents even attempted to enroll their children in online courses.

In August 2021, dedicated Civil Disobedience Movement teachers in Pekon established the Board of Education Pekon, a grassroots initiative aimed at promoting

inclusive access to education for students from various ethnic backgrounds and those residing in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps within the township areas. Collaborating with village committees and IDP camp leaders, their efforts were instrumental in bridging the education gap, ensuring that children of different ethnicities could continue their learning journeys despite the prevailing challenges in the conflicts.

In 2022, the Pekon Board of Education successfully opened 87 schools through the collaborative efforts of the local community. These schools include 13 high schools, 36 middle schools, and 38 primary schools, collectively staffed by 702 teachers. Notably, 378 of these educators are volun-



Children hiding in a bomb shelter (Source: Facebook)



Children hiding in a bomb shelter (Source: Facebook)

teers. Among the volunteers, 86 have completed university education, 180 are presently Civil Disobedience Movement university students, and 112 with high school qualifications. The remaining teachers are actively engaged in the Civil Disobedience Movement, an important civil resistance effort.

The ongoing conflict and political unrest in Myanmar has had a serious detrimental effect on the education of the children in Pekon Township. The military coup in 2021 led to the closure of all schools. The ongoing conflict and political unrest have not only disrupted the children's education, but also negatively impacted their emotions and behavior.

### **PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a systematic and in-depth analysis of the challenges encountered by teachers involved in the delivery of education within conflict-affected regions. The paper addresses the following questions *1: What are the primary challenges faced by teachers in conflict-affected areas? 2: How do these challenges impact the teaching and learning processes in conflict-affected areas? 3. How have teachers coped with these challenges?*

This research has both academic and practical significance for educational policymakers, educators, and humanitarian organizations working to enhance education in conflict-affected areas. By examining the challenges, coping strategies, and psychological aspects faced by teachers and educators, this study seeks to provide empirical insights on the resilience and commitment of those directly involved in education during difficult times by highlighting their experiences and providing recommendations that can inform policies and procedures.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research is based on in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions with education stakeholders who are actively involved in conflict-affected regions of Myanmar.

Thirteen individuals, including teachers, Board of Education members, and tutors involved in teaching and training in conflict-affected areas, were selected for in-depth individual interviews using purposive sampling. This diverse group included both male and female educators with various roles in the education system, such as Board of Education members, tutors, and teachers. These interviews delved deeper into their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. Also,

a focus group discussion was conducted with seven participants, representing different roles, including Board of Education members, tutors, and teachers. This discussion allowed for collaborative exploration of challenges and potential solutions, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. For participant demographics, see tables 1 and 2 at the end of the article. I employed a thematic analysis to organize and label data into categories. These categories were grouped together and reorganized to form themes and sub-themes. I also included relevant quotes to support these themes. See tables 3 and 4 at the end of the article for a list of themes. It is essential to note that the entire data collection process was conducted in the Burmese language, with subsequent English translations completed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Even though education is a fundamental right for all children, delivering education in conflict-affected areas can be extremely difficult. The World Bank (2019) pointed out that students on conflict-affected areas have fewer opportunities to study and succeed academically since there are not enough resources, including textbooks, teaching aids, and infrastructure. Moreover, security threats such as violence, school attacks, and abductions create a hostile environment for teachers and students, hindering the teaching and learning processes.

Conflicts refer to enduring disputes or tensions among people or groups, which can escalate into armed confrontations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (2008) defined armed conflicts as either prolonged battles involving two or more nations or ongoing clashes between government military forces or one or more organized armed groups, marked by a certain level of intensity. Conflict situations result in trauma and emotional distress among teachers and students, resulting in the provision of additional support to maintain an optimal environment for learning (Saunders et al., 2023).

In conflict-affected regions, schools are frequently damaged, destroyed, or occupied by armed forces, limiting access to education (Machel, 1996). The turmoil often forces teachers and students to flee their homes, resulting in psychological trauma of violence that hinders learning and educational success (Betancourt et al., 2013). Moreover, conflicts can worsen existing education inequities disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations, such as females and ethnic minorities, who face additional barriers to gaining access to a quality education (UNESCO, 2011).

Buchanan and colleagues (2010) underscore the important role of teachers in

supporting the mental health of children affected by war trauma. Due to the limited availability of mental health support services for children in such situations, teachers can play an important role in improving the mental well-being of disaster-affected communities (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

Sommers (2002) asserts that teachers play a more critical role in crisis situations. In addition to their instructional tasks, teachers play a multifaceted role in supporting the physical, social, and psychosocial development of children. De Berry et al. (2003) claim that teachers, along with parents, stand as the most trusted figures in the lives of children. Even in the absence of adequate educational resources, this trust enables teachers to have a major positive impact on a child's welfare.

Ullrich (2009) highlights a variety of stressors impacting teachers including lacking of professional resources, interactions with students having behavioral issues, overcrowded classrooms, overwhelming workloads, and inadequate administrative and professional support. The heightened psychological distress experienced by students during the times of armed conflict presents a tough challenge for teachers. In a study investigating the experiences of teachers in refugee camps, Wa-Mbaleka (2013) found that an overwhelming 89% of teachers expressed concerns about the traumatic experiences encountered by their students in refugee or IDP camps. This underlines the exceptional stress faced by teachers in these contexts.

Dealing with these obstacles can lead to significant levels of burnout among teachers (Betoret, 2006). Wa-Mbaleka (2013) identifies seven major educational obstacles affecting teachers in conflict areas. These obstacles include disparities in accessing financial support, managing a large number of students, coping with limited educational facilities, encountering restricted opportunities for teacher training, coping with constrained curriculum options, facing limited access to marketable skills, and dealing with negative attitudes toward female education.

Teachers can play an important role in implementing school-based interventions to mitigate and prevent war-related trauma symptoms in children (Werner, 2005). However, in conflict-affected regions, teachers often do not receive adequate training. Machel (1996) highlights that the effectiveness of teachers typically declines significantly during times of armed conflict, often because teachers themselves experiencing violence, injury, trauma, or even sexual abuse.



According to Seyle and colleagues (2013), a teacher's mental health has a significant influence on the quality of education provided to children in emergency situations. Given these additional stressors, Ramos (2011) strongly recommends that researchers investigate the impact of trauma, burnout, and resilience on the quality of teaching in schools located in conflict areas.

Previous studies on the difficulties faced by educators in conflict-affected areas provide useful insights into their complex challenges. However, many studies mainly concentrate on the immediate issues teachers deal with during conflicts, which include a lack of resources and physical and emotional security. While these concerns are undoubtedly important, there's a lack of research that deeply investigates the various experiences and coping strategies of teachers and educators during these turbulent times. It's crucial to investigate their social, psychological, and teaching-related adjustments to fully understand teachers' roles. Additionally, much of the existing research doesn't include the voices and viewpoints of the teachers themselves; instead, they rely on external observations and reports. Inclusion of their narratives and personal experiences can provide a better understanding of the challenges they face, particularly the unique historical and cultural contexts within which they are located.

## FINDINGS

The following key issues are identified as major challenges faced by teachers in the conflict-affected Pekon Township.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

In conflict-affected areas, teachers confronted a number of psychological obstacles that significantly impacted their daily lives and teaching activities. These obstacles included living in constant fear, the need to prepare to run and hide for safety, and the emotional cost of seeing children suffer from the ongoing conflict. Airstrikes and heavy weapons launched by the military have posed a constant danger and made it difficult to concentrate on delivering education. One member of the Board of Education shared in-depth insights during interviews stating,

*Our Board of Education office is often targeted by heavy artillery fire. I vividly remember an instance when I heard the ominous sound of heavy weapons and immediately rushed to find shelter in a trench. The constant fear of another attack weighs heavily on my mind.*

The concerns of parents posed a significant challenge for teachers, encom-

passing issues related to school recognition and potential repercussions from the military junta. Moreover, parents within the community held diverse political affiliations, some of whom aligned with the military, while their respective villages or regions fell under the governance of revolutionary ethnic armed groups. A member of the Board of Education said,



Some of the schools in Pekon Township, 2022 (Photos by author)

*There are different perspectives on community-based education within our community. Some parents express concerns about sending their children to these schools since they are not officially recognized. Political beliefs also influenced other parents who do not want to be retaliated against by the military for not sending their children to the government schools.*

Teachers also face challenges in ensuring a safe learning environment because of deliberate military junta attacks on schools, resulting in notable physical and psychological impacts on students. One teacher shared,

*The constant threat of heavy weapons and airstrikes has a significant physical and mental impact on our students. It's challenging because the military junta targets schools, making it hard to ensure a safe learning en-*



Some of the schools in Pekon Township, 2022 (Photos by author)

*vironment. As teachers, we often have to reduce our teaching hours and resort to home-based teaching to protect students from airstrikes and overcrowding. Frequent school closures also directly affect the quality of education and its effectiveness, disrupting the learning process.*

This environment of continuous fear has made it challenging to maintain an effective learning environment. One of the teachers stated during the in-depth interview,

*We worry about safety, including the dangers that come from airstrikes and conflict. This creates significant threats not only to teachers but also to students. These worries impact not only our physical well-being but also cause anxiety and potential trauma, especially among the children.*

### **FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS**

Teachers in conflict-affected regions were confronted with significant financial constraints. In addition to their personal well-being, teachers often were unable to provide essential educational materials, such as textbooks and teaching aids, due to limited financial resources. Inadequate funding also resulted in shorter training sessions, which hindered the professional development of instructors. These limitations lead to a decline in the quality of education, affecting students' learning experiences. A teacher noted,

*We encounter growing challenges due to the escalating costs in our daily lives. Basic necessities like food and supplies have become hard to afford. On the other hand, the community has started imposing monthly school fees on students to support teachers and teaching materials. This situation has created additional barriers to education, particularly for children who can't afford these fees.*

### **INADEQUATE SUPPORT AND TRAINING**

Educators in conflict-affected regions have a significant need for support and training. This includes professional development opportunities, basic educational resources, psychological support services, etc., to empower educators, improve their teaching effectiveness, and enhance their overall well-being, which would enable them to provide quality education. It was observed that there was a significant gap in teacher capacity, particularly among volunteer teachers.

A teacher shared,

*In some schools, there is a clear need for more teachers, and the Board of Education has been contacted about this issue. However, a challenge emerges*





Some of the schools for internally displaced children (Photos by author)



Some of the schools for internally displaced children (Photos by author)

due to financial constraints faced by the Board, which makes it difficult to hire more teachers. These financial limitations also lead to shorter training sessions, impeding the professional development of teachers. Significantly, there exists a noticeable disparity in teaching quality between volunteer teachers and experienced ones, highlighting the urgent necessity for comprehensive training to enhance teacher capacity. Volunteer teachers, in particular, tend to receive lower compensations compared to their experienced counterparts.

Among Pekon's educational workforce, consisting of 700 teachers spread across more than 80 schools, volunteer teachers make up a significant 54%. The recruitment of these volunteers is contingent upon local prerequisites and the backing they receive from the community for their fundamental welfare such as food and housing. It is noteworthy that



Teacher Training conducted by Board of Education Pekon, 2022 (Photos by author)

volunteer teachers were initially assessed with lower teaching quality. This assessment underscores the necessity for comprehensive training initiatives aimed at elevating their teaching capacities, a recognition that emerged from their early teaching experiences.

### **STUDENTS' LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Challenges for students encompasses various barriers preventing them from receiving a quality education in conflict-affected regions. These challenges include forced displacement from their homes and schools, financial constraints, inadequate access to educational resources such as textbooks and learning materials, safety concerns generated by hostile learning environment, and disruptions to their emotional well-being due to the ongoing conflict. A teacher described these challenges:

*Most of the students are IDPs who experience various disruptions in their daily lives. These challenges include issues related to accommodation, coping with food shortages, and some of our students are obliged to share family responsibilities and work outside, which, regrettably, kept them away from at school.*

Additionally, family and personal circumstances, such as family obligations and the loss of family members can undermine students' access to education. A teacher shared,

*Some high school students have lost interest in education and they are willing to join armed groups.*

### **EMPOWERING AND SATISFYING EXPERIENCES FOR TEACHERS IN CONFLICT ZONES**

Despite the daunting obstacles they face, teachers in conflict zones have noted that they have had empowering and rewarding experiences. Some teachers said they gained strength from observing students' passion to learn and develop



Teacher Training conducted by Board of Education Pekon, 2022  
(Photos by author)

amidst difficult circumstances:

*Despite these challenges, we teachers demonstrate incredible resilience. We provide moral support to our colleagues, prioritize advocating for the truth against the junta and children's rights, and adapt by conducting classes in unconventional settings.*

The active participation of some parents and community member, along with the support and encouragement of colleagues, plays a crucial role in fostering positive experiences and driving progress. Focus group members shared:

*Students are improving social and communication skills through extracurricular activities including teaching oral history and storytelling, sharing traditional wisdom, cultural insights, and practical skills of community members, such as weaving, traditional farming practices, agricultural activities, sports, and even traditional dance. (Teacher)*

*Teachers adapt their teaching methods to the conflict situation, focusing on critical thinking encouraging group discussions, debates, and problem-solving exercises. We also try to promote opportunities for students to ask questions and let them think individually as well as collaboratively. (Teacher)*

*Teachers rely on each other for emotional support and develop resilience in challenging conditions. (Board of Education member).*

In Myanmar's centralized education system, where respect for seniority and



Children and women running away from the conflict in 2021  
(Photos by author)



conformity to established norms are traditionally emphasized, young teachers have typically been relegated to the role of followers rather than leaders. This hierarchy within the teaching profession often limits the autonomy and initiative of younger educators. The structure tends to discourage them from actively

shaping or innovating teaching methods or curricula. During the conflict, many senior educators may not have initially taken the lead in establishing and managing schools or training sections. However, this circumstance has highlighted the remarkable capabilities of younger teachers, who have taken on these roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. This situation during the conflict underscores the roles and capabilities of young teachers, as well as the shift in perception by senior educators. A teacher noted,

During the conflict, many senior educators may not have initially taken the lead in establishing and managing schools or training sections. However, this circumstance has highlighted the remarkable capabilities of younger teachers, who have taken on these roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. This situation during the conflict underscores the roles and capabilities of young teachers, as well as the shift in perception by senior educators. A teacher noted,



*We, younger teachers are taking on leadership roles and contributing to education despite challenges.*

## **SOLUTIONS FOR EDUCATION CHALLENGES**

**Psychological Challenges:** Instant attention is required to the psychological impact on teachers and educators. The implementation of mental health support initiatives, encompassing counselling services and trauma-informed training, can function as a fundamental component in fostering resilience. It is essential to form partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and mental health practitioners in order to provide effective coping mechanisms for fear and anxiety.

**Financial Constraints:** A multifaceted approach is required to address the financial constraints that educators encounter. Investigating potential international aid and funding opportunities that are specifically intended for regions affected by conflict can provide much-needed resources. It is essential that humanitarian organizations and educators work together to lessen the financial burdens of students and teachers. Advocacy for increased support for education in conflict zones is an overarching goal that needs attention.

**Teacher Training:** An effective strategy needs to be implemented in order to close the support and training gap. It is important that we include all teachers, with a particular emphasis on volunteer teachers, in comprehensive training programs. In order to level the playing field for all educators, seeking partnerships with educational institutions and non-governmental organizations can offer continuing professional development, mentorship, and resources.

**Empowering Experiences for Teachers:** A strong community network is necessary to identify and highlight the empowering experiences that teachers have. Teachers can overcome difficulties by fostering emotional support, shared experiences, and collaboration. It is essential to strengthen community engagement through the involvement of local leaders, parents, and community members in educational activities. A culture of appreciation can be fostered via community gatherings that honor teachers' achievements and resiliency.

**Community Engagement and Extracurricular Activities:** Strengthening community engagement through involvement in educational initiatives is essential. A comprehensive strategy is to create extracurricular activities leveraging with local resources that improve students' social and communication skills while maintaining their cultural awareness. Encouraging parents, community members, and local leaders to assist teachers promotes a shared responsibility for education.


## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The case study on Myanmar provides insights into how mobile education is organized in conflict settings. The emergence of the shadow NUG as an alternative administration is indicative of the need for organized efforts to ensure educational continuity during times of conflict. This community-based approach results in the establishment of community schools and the recruitment of teachers, illustrating a grassroots method of ensuring access to education.

The experiences mentioned in the case study suggest that educators adapt their teaching methods to align with the conflict situation. They focus on critical thinking, group discussions, debates, and problem-solving exercises. Additionally, extracurricular activities, such as teaching oral history, storytelling, and cultural insights, showcase how educators incorporate traditional knowledge and skills into the curriculum, making education relevant to the unique context of the conflict-affected region.

The case study highlights the recruitment of volunteer teachers based on local requirements and community support, emphasizing the flexibility required for teacher recruitment in these areas. The lower initial ratings of volunteer teachers regarding their teaching quality underscore the necessity for comprehensive training programs to enhance their capacity. Furthermore, the willingness of young teachers to take on leadership roles during the conflict situation demonstrates their adaptability and empowerment, contributing to the continuity of education.

The establishment of a Board of Education by Civil Disobedience Movement teachers illustrates how educators take on administrative responsibilities to bridge educational gaps in these conflict-affected areas. It showcases the commitment of educators to ensuring access to quality education. The case study also highlights the remarkable feat of opening 87 schools in 2022 through the collaborative efforts of the local community. This showcases the resilience and determination of the community in maintaining access to education. The variety of schools, including high schools, middle schools, and primary schools, along with the diverse qualifications of the teachers involved, underlines the comprehensiveness of the education system in these conflict-affected areas.

In summary, the case study on Myanmar indirectly reveals the dynamics of mobile education in conflict settings. It is a community-driven and adaptive system, responding to the immediate needs of the population. Local resources and community support play a pivotal role, not only in recruiting teachers but also in ensuring the basic well-being of the educational system. The experience of conflict necessitates the adoption of innovative teaching methods that focus on critical thinking and adaptability, aligning education with the immediate environment and challenges. These insights collectively provide a nuanced view of how mobile education operates in complex and conflict-affected regions. 



**Table 1: Interview Participant Demographics (Total: 13 participants)**

Characteristic	Number of Participants	Percentage
<b>Role</b>		
Board of Education Members	3	23.10%
Tutors	3	23.10%
Teachers	7	53.80%
<b>Gender Distribution</b>		
Female	9	69.20%
Male	4	30.80%

**Table 2: Composition of Focus Group Discussion Participants (Total: 7 participants)**

Role	Number of Participants
Board of Education Members	2
Tutors	2
Teachers	3

**Table 3: Key Themes from Focus Group Discussion**

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes/Quotes
Safety and Security Concerns	Threats to Life and Physical Safety	"We often hear airstrikes and heavy weapons nearby, it's terrifying."
		"Students are scared even by car sounds due to past traumatic experiences."
	Psychological Fears and Trauma	"Many children exhibit signs of trauma."
		"Teachers try to provide emotional support to help students cope with fear."
	Impact of Conflict on Teaching and Learning	"Effective teaching is challenging due to the anxiety caused by the conflict."

Table 3: Key Themes from Focus Group Discussion continued

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes/Quotes
Economic and Resource Challenges	Financial Difficulties for Teachers	"Commodity prices are rising, making it difficult for teachers to afford basic necessities."
		"Teachers are struggling to make ends meet, which affects their teaching."
	Impact of Economic Problems on Education	"Economic challenges are leading to delays in educational activities."
		"Parents are unable to provide essential resources for their children's education."
	Scarcity of Educational Resources	"There is a lack of teaching materials and resources in schools."
Disruption of Education	Disrupted Learning Due to Conflict	"Some high school students have lost interest in education and they are willing to join armed groups."
		"Some students have been out of school since 2020 Covid and due to ongoing conflict, it is hard to get proper engagement."
	High School Students Joining Armed Groups	"The conflict is pushing some students to join armed groups instead of attending school. Some did drop out the school"
Community Perspectives	Diverse Views on Community-Based Education	"Not all parents support community schools; some believe it's not recognized education."
	Parental Influence and Beliefs	"Parents play a significant role in influencing their children's education choices."
Teacher Capacity and Adaptation	Teacher Training and Development	"Volunteer teachers require more training and development to improve their teaching skills."
	Innovative Teaching Approaches	"Teachers adapt their teaching methods to the conflict situation, focusing on critical thinking."
	Psychological Support and Resilience	"Teachers rely on each other for emotional support and develop resilience in challenging conditions."

Table 3: Key Themes from Focus Group Discussion continued

Positive Outcomes Amid Challenges	Adoption of Technology and Online Learning	"Teachers are increasingly using technology and online resources for personal development."
	Development of Social and Communication Skills	"Students are improving social and communication skills through extracurricular activities."
	Empowerment of Young Teachers	"We, younger teachers are taking on leadership roles and contributing to education despite challenges."

Table 4: Key Themes from In-Depth Interviews

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes/Quotes
Safety and Security Concerns	Threat of airstrikes and heavy weaponry	"We worry about safety, including the danger from airstrikes and conflict that create significant threats to both teachers and students. These worries impact not only our physical well-being but also cause anxiety and potential trauma, especially among the children"
	Fear, anxiety, and psychological impact	"The constant fear of airstrikes hinders our ability to provide a conducive learning environment."
	Priority of safety and well-being	"Ensuring the safety and well-being of our students and staff are a top priority."
Financial Constraints Impacting Education	Limited financial resources for textbooks and aids	"Limited financial resources not only impact on our personal well-being but also prevent us from providing necessary textbooks and teaching aids for the students."
	Constraints in providing comprehensive training	"Constraints in budget affect the quality of teachers, shorten the training program, and subsequently affect the students as well."



Table 4: Key Themes from In-Depth Interviews continued

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes/Quotes
	Reduced quality of education due to budget limitations	"As teachers, we're facing increasing difficulties due to rising prices. Basic necessities like food and supplies have become hard to afford. The limitations in our budget result in a negative impact on the quality of teachers and subsequently affect the students as well."
Challenges in Education Delivery	Stationery shortages and disruptions in daily life	"There is a shortage of stationery items due to supply route closures."
	Collaborative efforts with Non-Government Organizations	"We collaborate with other organizations to support teachers and assist children."
Psychological Impact on Teachers and Students	Emotional toll on educators and their resilience	"The challenges and uncertainties affect my ability to work with a clear mind."
	Distressing experiences affecting students	"Children have experienced difficult and negative things during their time off in addition to family responsibilities."
	Need for tailored emotional support	"It became easy to get angry. Increased anxiety/stress."
	Collaboration and understanding in a distressed environment	"The main thing is to understand each other and to support each other mentally in this hard time."
Financial Support and Training Needs	Urgent need for financial support	"I would like to request financial support for teachers to ensure their livelihoods."
	The significance of comprehensive technical training	"It is necessary to provide extensive technical training to our teachers."

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# Towards Critical Dialogue with Refugee-Background Students

**Iuliia Fakhrutdinova**

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**IT WAS THE FALL OF 2018** in November when one of the lessons conducted at a high school in Vermont got imprinted in my head. I was a practicum teacher assisting the main teacher in the Reading and Writing class for refugee-background students. It was close to Thanksgiving; therefore, the lesson was devoted to this topic. Being an international student from Russia who was born in Uzbekistan, I did not know that much about Thanksgiving but had already heard about its controversy. I was sitting in the back of the classroom when the teacher was telling a story about a “friendly” Indigenous guide named Squanto who helped pilgrims plant and celebrate the first harvest. The teacher mentioned slavery and Native Americans. At that moment, the class full of multilingual refugee-background students from all over the world, including Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bhutan, Nepal, and Somalia raised their hands. Their faces expressed bewilderment and curiosity. Some of them asked “But what happened to Squanto?” or “Why was he enslaved?” They wanted to know more what happened to Native Americans.

This still stands in my mind as a critical and teaching moment when students wanted to know more. This vignette is the reason why I decided to create a [unit plan](#) for high school multilingual students who are studying English as their additional language that will respond to refugee-background students’ contexts and take an asset-oriented stance by presenting media texts, books, art and stories created by refugee-background students. Critical Pedagogy together with Critical Race Theory has offered me a theoretical foundation and inspiration for this work.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

My relationship with Critical Pedagogy is fresh and new, and metaphorically, it was love at first sight when I started admiring every aspect of this pedago-

gy. What is so inspiring about it? My answer is context: letting political, historical, or socio-economic realities into the classrooms. This pedagogy is for, with, and about students. Critical pedagogy is philosophy and intellectual movement that relies on critical theory and Paulo Freire's praxis from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000, originally published in 1970) that encourages students and teachers to deeply think and critically reflect on existing inequalities then act upon them and make a change (Gounari, 2020; Freire, 2000). It opposes and resists the idea that schooling is a

great equalizer, that all schools have the same equal opportunities, that standardized tests give "opportunities" to everyone, that class does not play any role in schooling, and that schools should be apolitical, ahistorical, and neutral sites (Apple & Franklin, 2004; Au, 2018; Giroux, 2002, 2014; Gounari, 2018, 2020; Knopp, 2012). As Gounari (2020) states, "Critical Pedagogy (CP) is the acknowledgment that educational institutions are deeply political" (p. 5). According to McLaren (2002), CP "examines schools both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes the dominant society" (p. 163). In the time of COVID-19, Black Lives Matter movement, Asian hate, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and refugee crisis around the world, not considering schools as part of a historical and political context where teachers and students are political beings would be equal to living in a vacuum. This type of education only does harm and denies reality.

Therefore, my proposed unit plan is politically and historically situated in 2023 with a rising number of displaced people around the world due to catastrophic migration, post-COVID time, Southern U.S. Border Humanitarian Crisis, and ongoing work of inclusion of multilingual and anti-racist teaching curriculum in our schools. Observing all these realities, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire gives me hope to teach to transform, liberate, and transgress together with students when we are teacher-students and our students are student-teachers (Freire, 2000; hooks, 2014). Au (2018) states that Freire's pedagogy emphasizes dialectical materialism with the purpose of realizing the interrelated processes in the material world and intervening in those processes to change the world for

**It was love at first sight when I started admiring every aspect of [Critical] Pedagogy. What is so inspiring about it? My answer is context: letting political, historical, or socio-economic realities into the classrooms. This pedagogy is for, with, and about students.**

the better. For example, working with refugee-background students requires not only “teaching subjects,” it also requires that educators have a full understanding of the historical and political context of a country or countries refugee-background students come from, their multilingual and cultural background, their challenges in the United States such as standardized testing, Westernized ideology towards literacy, and racism. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* introduces such notions as reflection, action, and transformation/liberation (Freire, 2000). These notions should not be considered as a recipe for how to teach, but more of a philosophy for teaching to be explored by each educator. My unit plan is an invitation to researchers and educators to have a fruitful discussion and create together lessons that will respond to our students’ needs.

### CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Reading about the experiences of the refugee-background population, I realized that few scholars mention the racism this population faces in the United States. Refugee-background people are not a monolithic group of people, they can have different experiences based on their race, ethnicity, religion, culture, and language. For example, Somali refugee-background students might experience oppression based on the intersection of several layers of their identities: race, gender, refugee status, and religion (Magan, 2020). Even though Critical Pedagogy addresses oppression and urges scholars to situate schooling in its historical and political context, it still lacks a full conversation about racism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) does that; it is a form of scholarship, writing and activism that originated in legal studies in the 1970s and became a conceptual framework, methodology, and movement (see Bell, 1995; Harris & Patton, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013), which “challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented” and addresses racial inequity (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xii). CRT presents the following tenets: (1) CRT considers racism as ordinary and socially constructed; (2) CRT considers interest convergence; (3) CRT criticizes of so-called liberalism; (4) CRT considers intersectionality and anti-essentialism; and (5) CRT privileges the voices of people of color through storytelling and counter-storytelling (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Museus et al., 2015). Taking into consideration the first tenet that racism is present in our society, we cannot ignore that our refugee-background students might experience racism in the rise of racialized discourse from politicians and media that positions refugees as a threat. Therefore, my unit plan takes into consideration racism and tries to introduce the voices of refugee-background people in discussions and instructional materials as part of counter-storytelling.



## PREVIOUS LITERATURE AND RATIONALE

In the rapidly changing reality and conditions of the U.S. context, it is necessary to create curricula that address the needs of refugee-background students. There are already attempts from scholars to introduce culturally, politically, and historically relevant topics into diverse classrooms. Papen and Peach (2021) employed critical literacy with eleven-year-old primary school children in England by reading the picture book *The Color of Home* about a refugee boy from Somalia. The results showed how through critical literacy practices, children expressed their emotions, questioned the war, and deeply analyzed what “refugee” means and the choice of illustrations in this book. Even though the classroom did not have any refugee-background students, their study demonstrated how it is important to read critically and talk about the refugee crisis.

Dunkerly-Bean et al. (2014) understand Freirean concept of praxis with a discussion of the local and global inequality and injustice aiming to implement Human Rights Education through multimedia texts (e.g., young adult novels, graphic novels, picture books, human rights materials, and the film *Asylum*) with adolescents in the United States. In their study, students questioned the stereotypes about refugees after watching the film, felt disappointed by the injustices happening in the world, and wanted to act. Similarly, by applying Freire’s notion of ‘generative theme’ and intercultural literacy, Arizpe et al., (2014)

adopted annotations of visuals and annotations of text with migrant- and refugee-background students in two schools in Scotland. This allowed students to interrogate the meaning, words, and images used in the books. In a similar vein, Magee and Pherali (2019) relied on Critical Youth Empowerment from critical social theory which proposes six tenets: “(1) a welcoming and safe environment; (2) meaningful participation and engagement; (3) equitable power-sharing between youths and adults; (4) engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes; (5) participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change; and (6) integrated individual- and community-level empowerment” (pp. 268-269) in teaching Syrian refugee-background students in Jordan.

**In the rapidly changing reality and conditions of the U.S. context, it is necessary to create curricula that address the needs of refugee-background students. There are already attempts from scholars to introduce culturally, politically, and historically relevant topics into diverse classrooms.**

In working with three international newcomer high schools that have immigrant and refugee-background students, Bajaj and Bartlett (2017) added such aspects “(1) using diversity as a learning opportunity; (2) engaging translanguaging; (3) promotive civic engagement as curriculum; and (4) cultivating multidirectional aspirations” (p. 25). Bajaj et al. (2017) consider these characteristics as part of socio-politically relevant pedagogy for immigrant and refugee-background students with three other tenets: curriculum and pedagogy towards critical consciousness and global citizenship; school, family, and community engagement; and attention to material conditions of students’ lives.

**This unit is...inspiring students to question and be critical about what they read, see, watch, and hear.**

Taking into consideration these practices of Critical Pedagogy, I am presenting a unit plan in which will adopt some of the above-presented strategies. One of the gaps which I identified in these tenets is a lack of consideration of or conversation about racism towards refugee-background students and lack of opportunities to read counter stories that will encourage students to critically reflect and transform our reality. McLoughlin (2020) was one of the first educators who raised this issue in refugee-background education urging other scholars to take CRT stance/lens and go beyond the mainstream curricula.

## GOAL


The goal of the current unit plan *Critical Pedagogy: Refugee-background Students’ Experiences* is to recognize students’ experiences, have a dialogue with them, co-create knowledge, resist the hegemony of monolingualism and mainstream curricula, encourage agency, and act. This unit plan, following Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, should not be considered as a ready-made guide on how to transform and liberate. To the contrary, the goal of this unit is to start a conversation, problematizing the refugee crisis, racism, and xenophobia, and inspiring students to question and be critical about what they read, see, watch, and hear.

## CONTEXT AND LEARNERS

The unit plan is prepared for immigrant and refugee-background students in high school who start learning English for their mainstream classes. The plan can be part of high school Reading and Writing or Literacy curricula. The age of stu-

dents can vary from 15-30 years old. The unit can also be used with Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) or students in Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) programs. It is important to remember for this unit that students may have experienced trauma and have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which requires teachers to be more attentive, cautious, and familiar with trauma-informed pedagogy and teaching.

## PRAXIS

This unit plan was inspired by the resilience of refugee-background students who are brave, strong, and incredibly talented people from whom I learned so much during my volunteering experience. The ideas of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory are at the core of this unit plan. The *Critical Pedagogy: Refugee-background Students' Experiences* unit plan consists of three units: Unit 1 – Reflection, Unit 2 – Action, and Unit 3 – Transformation and Liberation, reflecting Freirean *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 

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# A Translanguaging Approach to Teaching and Learning

Laura Hamman-Ortiz & Kelly Cooney

“**TRANSLANGUAGING**” is a term used in the fields of linguistics and education to describe the fluid and dynamic ways in which bi/multilingual speakers use their language resources. It goes beyond the traditional concept of “code-switching,” which has tended to focus on how speakers switch between languages or dialects in a conversation, by emphasizing that multilingual individuals don’t neatly separate their languages but, instead, draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate and make meaning (García, 2009; Otheguy et al., 2015).



Translanguaging pedagogy is an approach to language education that embraces the diverse language resources of bi/multilingual students through strategically designing opportunities for students to use their full linguistic repertoire to support their learning. These pedagogies can be employed in any context involving bi/multilingual students, including contexts where English is the language of instruction and in bilingual learning contexts. Teachers also don’t have to speak all of the languages of their students in order to enact meaningful translanguaging pedagogy. This point is especially important given that 93% of bi/multilingual learners in Massachusetts are educated in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms in which bi/multilingual learners may speak a range of different languages and where English is typically the sole medium of instruction

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(MA DESE, 2022).

In their book, *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning*, García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) identify three components to a translanguaging pedagogy:

1. **Stance:** Translanguaging stance refers to teachers' beliefs about multilingual students and their language practices. Teachers with a translanguaging stance value home languages as an asset and develop curiosity about their students' languages.
2. **Design:** Translanguaging design means the actions that teachers take to implement practices that support their beliefs in the classroom. This includes the strategic use of students' home languages in planned lessons and units.
3. **Shifts:** Translanguaging shifts indicate teachers' ability to make moment-to-moment adjustments to instructional plans to meet the needs of bi/multilingual learners.

**Translanguaging design means the actions that teachers take to implement practices that support their beliefs in the classroom. This includes the strategic use of students' home languages in planned lessons and units.**

All three components are equally important, and together, create the necessary foundation for a translanguaging classroom. In the following section, we will address translanguaging *design*, in particular, with a focus on how teachers can strategically plan and implement translanguaging activities that support and affirm bi/multilingual learners.

## DESIGNING TRANSLANGUAGING PEDAGOGIES

Getting to know bi/multilingual students is an essential first step in developing a translanguaging classroom. By taking the time to understand students' linguistic backgrounds, proficiency levels in home languages (L1s) and English across language domains, and unique communication styles, educators can tailor their instructional approaches effectively. It is also vital to build rapport and trust through personal connections, which helps to create a supportive environment where students feel safe to express themselves in their preferred languages. Translanguaging pedagogies can then take many forms. Some focus on making cross-linguistic connections, such as teaching students how to identify cognates,



or words across two (or more) languages that have a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. For example, cognates in English and Spanish include *solid/sólido*, *circumference/circunferencia*, *edifice/edificio*, and *democracy/democracia*. In fact, approximately 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish, which means teaching cognates is an extremely useful strategy for building Spanish-speaking students' vocabulary, which can also bolster reading comprehension and support content learning.

Translanguaging pedagogies may also include strategically grouping students in ways that maximize learning. For example, bi/multilingual learners in an English-medium classroom who share an L1 might be strategically paired so that they can use that language to clarify and discuss new concepts. In a bilingual learning context, students with different language dominances (e.g., Spanish-dominant and English-dominant) might be paired so that they can support one another as they engage in learning activities across the two target languages.

Other translanguaging pedagogies involve strategically making space for students' home language(s) to be used as resources for learning. For example, teachers can invite bi/multilingual learners to draw upon any language of their choosing to annotate a text, discuss their prior knowledge about a given topic, or write the first draft of a persuasive essay. Figure 1 shows an example of a graphic organizer in which a student was invited to draw upon his full linguistic repertoire to brainstorm reasons to support his opinion that summer is better than winter. The student, a recently arrived English learner, had been attending school in the U.S. (in an SEI classroom) for only two days. Through making space for the student to use Spanish to brainstorm reasons, the teacher was able to apprentice the student into the language of persuasion in English and gain access to more accurate formative assessment of what the student could do in writing.

the because

Which season do you like better, summer or winter? Why?

Claim: What do you think?	I like <u>summer</u> better than <u>winter</u>
Reason 1	My first reason is <u>I like sun</u> because <u>roxy bonito</u>
Reason 2	Another reason is <u>I like <del>beach</del> <sup>the</sup> beach</u> <u>porque es rico</u> because <u>it a la playa</u>
Reason 3	My last reason is <u>I like ice cream</u> <u>me gusta</u> porque es bueno <u>cuando ay calor</u>
Conclusion	In conclusion

Figure 1. Translanguaging for Planning Writing

Translanguaging pedagogies also extend to classroom texts. Teachers can provide translations of key texts in students' home languages or have students analyze the language of texts through a translanguaging perspective. For example, older learners might consider how Sandra Cisneros and Pam Muñoz Ryan strategically use Spanish words in their novels (*The House on Mango Street* and *Esperanza Rising*, respectively). Younger learners could analyze a text like *Octopus Stew* by Eric Velasquez, considering when and why the narrator and his grandmother communicate in Spanish and what these language choices reveal about the characters (see Table 1 for sample analysis).

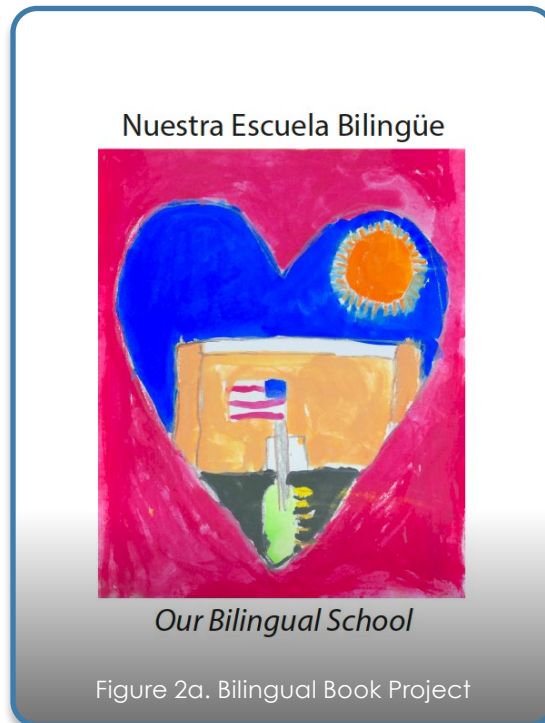


Table 1. Translanguaging text analysis of *Octopus Stew* (Velasquez, 2019)

Example of translanguaging / Use of Spanish in the text	Why do you think the author used Spanish here?
pulpo guisado	It is a Puerto Rican dish (family would probably use the Spanish name)
"I've been making pulpo guisado since your dad era un niño, since he was a boy."	Grandma speaks English and Spanish. Translanguaging is the everyday way that she communicates with her bilingual family.
¿Qué es esto?	Spanish seems to be used here for emphasis.
Wela, tenga cuidado!	Wela is a nickname for Grandma in Spanish. In emergencies, your home language might come out first.
Okay, mijo...	Mijo is slang for "mi hijo" and reveals the characters' familiarity.

Students can also be invited to create their own bi/multilingual texts. For example, in one second grade dual language classroom, the teacher implemented a

translanguaging project in which students collectively created a bilingual book (Figures 2a and 2b) about their experience attending a bilingual school (Hamman-Ortiz, 2023). In order to create the text, students first brainstormed and wrote their ideas in Spanish and then worked together in small groups to translate each sentence into English. Throughout this process, students engaged in cross-linguistic comparisons, identifying similarities and differences between English and Spanish, which enhanced their developing biliteracy.

As we hope is clear from these examples, there are a wide range of ways to implement translanguaging pedagogies in the classroom to support the learning and engagement of bi/multilingual learners. For more ideas, see Table 3. There are also a wide range of translanguaging resources available through the [CUNY-NYSIEB project website](#).

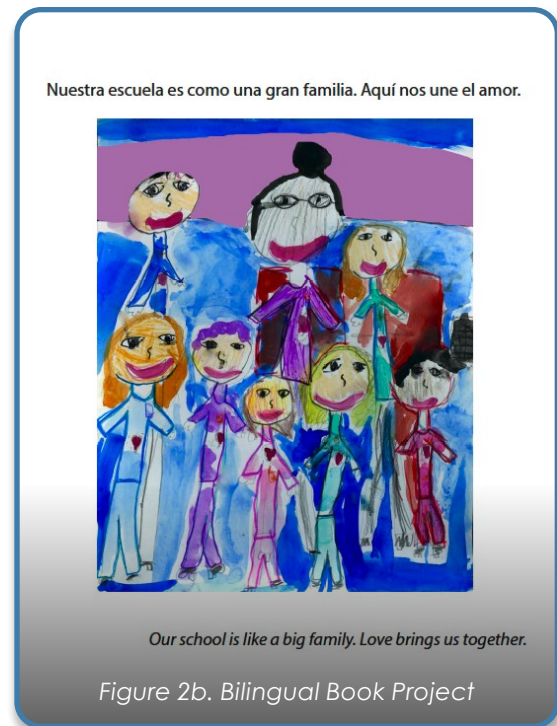
### IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to be clear about what translanguaging is and isn't (see Table 2).

Table 2. Clarifying Translanguaging Pedagogy

What Translanguaging Pedagogy Is	What Translanguaging Pedagogy Isn't
Intentional and strategic	A linguistic "free for all"
The creation of spaces for students to leverage all they know across their linguistic repertoires for deeper learning	Concurrent translation (i.e., the teacher switching back and forth between languages)
A radical reframing of how we understand bilingualism and learning spaces for bi/multilingual learners	A "one and done" activity or assignment

First, translanguaging is not a "one and done" activity or assignment. Nor does it mean that the teacher is engaged in concurrent translation (that is, constantly switching back and forth between languages throughout the lesson) or that



students are told to use any language at any time for any purpose. Rather, translanguaging pedagogy is intentional and strategic, designed to support bi/multilingual learners to successfully acquire a new language and learn new content. To accomplish this goal, there will certainly be times when bi/multilingual learners are asked to perform monolingually—to read, write, or speak in only one language—while at other times they will be invited to use their full linguistic repertoire to engage in a learning task or activity.

Taking this into account, teachers designing translanguaging pedagogies should carefully consider when, where, and why translanguaging could be meaningfully incorporated into instruction. Which resources might be beneficial to provide in a student's L1? Which activities might be enhanced from having a bilingual or translanguaged final product? When would it make sense to provide supports so that students are developing their skills in one language? When does student engagement and content learning take precedence over using the target language? One suggestion for maintaining intentionality in translanguaging pedagogy design is to consider planning with a translanguaging objective in mind, in addition to planning content and language objectives. For example, in an SEI context, a teacher might draft the following lesson objectives:

- Content Objective: Students will identify the causes of the American Revolution.
- Language Objective: Students will use “cause connectors” to talk about the causes of the American Revolution (in English).
- Translanguaging Objectives:
  1. Students will build background knowledge by watching short videos about the American Revolution in their L1.
  2. Students will recognize cognates related to “cause” as well as the topic.

Translanguaging is also, importantly, not *just* a teaching strategy (Li, 2023; Somerville & Faltis, 2022). Rather, translanguaging should be understood as a radical reframing of how we understand bilingualism and learning spaces for bi/multilingual learners. A translanguaging stance centers the dynamic identities and experiences of bi/multilingual students and views their diverse linguistic repertoires as resources that should be celebrated and cultivated, not remediated, and as assets that enrich the whole school community.



## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SEI AND ESL CONTEXTS

In some schools, teachers and administrators do not support the use of students' home languages in the SEI or ESL classroom. This can be due to a variety of reasons such as a misinterpretation of the definition of ESL or SEI, a lack of understanding of the academic benefits of L1 supports, and/or the lack of translanguaging pedagogy in state-mandated SEI endorsement requirements. It is worth emphasizing that there is a large research base demonstrating the many cognitive benefits to providing students access to their L1 for second language acquisition and content learning. Many skills and cognitive abilities transfer across languages (Baker & Wright, 2021; Cummins, 1981). Furthermore, allowing a student to leverage their bilingualism in an asset-based setting can foster a sense of belonging (Lang, 2019; Pacheco & Hamilton, 2020; Sayer, 2013), which also contributes to positive outcomes in learning. Another consideration for SEI and ESL contexts is that there are often students from a wide range of L1 backgrounds. Sometimes, the teacher may speak one of their student's home languages (e.g., Spanish) but not the others. It is important that teachers in these contexts work to ensure that all students are able to access their L1 through translanguaging pedagogies (Allard, 2019).

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR BILINGUAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

In bilingual education contexts where students are learning in and through two languages, there are ample opportunities for meaningful translanguaging pedagogies since all students are developing proficiency in two (or more) languages. However, traditionally, many bilingual programs established strict rules for language separation in an effort to provide a full “immersion” experience in each language. More recently, the practice of language separation has come under some scrutiny (Hamman-Ortiz, 2019; Palmer et al., 2014; Sánchez et al., 2018), especially given recent research about the dynamic nature of bilingualism and the benefits of translanguaging pedagogy. While we agree that bilingual learning contexts should involve a wide range of translanguaging pedagogies, we also advise that such pedagogies be strategically and carefully executed, with thoughtful consideration of how translanguaging impacts learning

**While we agree that bilingual learning contexts should involve a wide range of translanguaging pedagogies, we also advise that such pedagogies be strategically and carefully executed, with thoughtful consideration of how translanguaging impacts learning spaces dedicated for minoritized language use.**

spaces dedicated for minoritized language use.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Finally, translanguaging is not simply a practice in classrooms shared by students and teachers; administrators can play a positive role in shaping schools into translanguaging spaces that represent our multilingual world. To do this, school leaders can create both physical and emotional spaces that ensure “the entire range of language practices of all children and families are evident in the school’s textual landscape...as well as in the interactions of all members of the school community.” (García & Menken, 2015, p. 100). Here are some ideas for actions that administrators can take:

- Conduct an assessment of the languages present in environmental print in the school
- Build a multilingual school ecology (e.g., use of multiple languages for announcements, letters home, signage, report cards)
- Purchase bi/multilingual books for teachers’ classroom libraries
- Provide assessments in languages other than English, and use the information in data meetings
- Ensure bilingual learners have access to supports in their L1 (peers, texts, dictionaries, interventionists, etc.)
- Build bilingual programs, either within the school or as before/after-school programs
- Create heritage language and world language programs


There is so much that can be done to adopt a translanguaging stance and to incorporate translanguaging design into schools and classrooms. We encourage all teachers and leaders at schools with bi/multilingual learners to consider how you could begin to bring translanguaging pedagogies into your schools today to cultivate a supportive and affirming learning space for bi/multilingual students. 

Table 3. Examples of Translanguaging Pedagogies

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Teach cognates	Explicitly teach students how to recognize cognates and point out similarities and differences between their L1s and English.	Create a Spanish/English cognate anchor chart that students can continually add to as they identify new cognates in their learning.	<a href="#">Bilingual Glossaries and Cognates   NYU Steinhardt</a> <a href="#">Using Cognates with ELLs   Colorín Colorado</a> <a href="#">Colorín Colorado Cognate List</a>
Teach Greek and Latin roots	Plan root words activities to deepen content learning for all students.	Henderson & Ingram (2018) show how a third-grade bilingual teacher used translanguaging pedagogy to explain root word etymologies such as “quart,” which he connected to the Spanish “cuarto” (fourth, quarter, room) and English “quarter,” thereby deepening students’ understanding of these mathematical concepts and showing how they were linguistically related.	<a href="#">Effective Ways to Teach Greek and Latin Roots AND Vocabulary - Rockin Resources</a> <a href="#">Root Words, Roots and Affixes   Reading Rockets</a>
Contrastive analysis	Support cross-linguistic transfer by drawing students’ attention to similarities and differences between English and other languages.	Teach a mini-lesson on word-ending patterns between Portuguese and English: -tion → -ção (fiction/ <i>ficção</i> , option/ <i>opção</i> ) -sion → -são (exclusion/ <i>exclusão</i> , decision/ <i>decisão</i> ) Create a list of words in the students’ L1s that make the same sound as in English. Highlight these when teaching letters/sounds.	<a href="#">COGNATE WORDS, ENDING IN: LY-MENT-ANCE-OR-OUS</a> <a href="#">Portuguese-English Cognates</a> <a href="#">Potential Impact of Portuguese Syntax and Phonology on English Language Learners</a>

Table 3. Examples of Translanguaging Pedagogies continued

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Holistic reading assessment	Become familiar with the phonological patterns in students' L1s and take these into account when doing reading assessments to avoid "error labeling."	Example: There is no /r/ sound at the end of words in Haitian-Creole. As a result, speakers/readers may delete final /r/ in English words (e.g., you may hear flow for floor). Ascenzi-Moreno (2018) shows how one ESL teacher documented language-specific miscues so she could isolate the features the student needed help developing, while also recognizing the multilingual strengths he was bringing to the assessment.	<a href="#">Resources / Potential Impact of Syntax and Phonology on ELLs</a>
Preview content in students' home language	Provide content knowledge resources in students' L1s and in multiple modalities.	Prior to reading a text about a complex topic in English, have a brief discussion or watch a short video about the topic in the students' L1s.  This strategy can also be extended into "preview/view/review": (1) preview the topic in the students' L1, (2) view the new material in the language of instruction, (3) review what was learned in the students' L1.	<a href="#">Las ROCAS para niños - Formación, clasificación y usos - Ciencias para niños</a>  <a href="#">Epic   The Leading Digital Library for Kids   Unlimited Access to 40,000 of the Best Children's Books &amp; Learning Videos</a> <a href="#">Martin Luther King, Jr. - Español</a> <a href="#">Wikipedia in Portuguese: Revolução Americana – Wikipédia, a enciclopédia livre</a>



Table 3. Examples of Translanguaging Pedagogies continued

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Provide students with access to a multilingual library or listening center	Build a multilingual library or listening center of magazines, fictional narratives, poetry, non-fiction, etc. Include a variety of languages beyond those spoken in the school.	Build a classroom multilingual and multicultural library for students to enjoy during independent reading. Find texts where characters translanguage to use as counter texts and/or mentor texts to apprentice students into how to do the same in their writing.  Include books that demonstrate various writing systems to encourage curiosity and pride in multilingualism.	<a href="https://librosforlanguage.org/books">https://librosforlanguage.org/books</a>  <a href="#">Build Your Stack: Bilingual Books for Emergent Bilinguals - National Council of Teachers of English</a>  <a href="#">Unite for Literacy</a>  <a href="#">Creating a 21st Century Listening Library   New York State Education Department</a>
Strategic grouping	Strategically group students based on language strengths for different tasks. Allow for student choice too!	Students may be grouped based on their L1 to discuss strategies for solving math problems. Later in the lesson, when students are writing a procedural recount, they might choose to partner with an L1 buddy or a monolingual student.	<a href="#">ELSF   Resource: Strategic Grouping for Home Language Supports</a>
Analyzing character development in bi/multilingual texts	Plan text talks around how authors develop characters using translanguaging. When students write narratives, support them in creating story worlds with multilingual characters who also translanguage.	Students and teachers deconstruct texts in which characters translanguage and discuss why the author employed other languages for dialogue, narration, etc.	See Table 1
Collaborative bi/multilingual projects	Students work in pairs, groups, or as a whole class to create bi/multilingual products (e.g., books, podcasts, videos, poems)	Students work in small groups to draft a text in one language and then collectively translate the text into the other language. The teacher supports the students in learning how to translate for meaning and draws attention to similarities and differences across languages.	See Figures 2a and 2b

Table 3. Examples of Translanguaging Pedagogies continued

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Provide assessments in students' home languages	Providing assessments in home languages allows us to have a truer picture of what students can do.	To determine prior knowledge before a unit, ask a student to respond to a prompt using any language(s) of their choosing.  Advocate for high-stakes assessments and universal screening to be given in students' dominant languages.	Marco DALE   WIDA Spanish Proficiency Level Descriptors  Machado-Casas, M., Maldonado, S. I., & Flores, B. B. (2022). <i>Assessment and evaluation in bilingual education</i> . Peter Lang.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Kelly Cooney** is known for her strong instructional leadership and success building systems in districts. With over 25 years of combined experience working in Massachusetts schools as an ESL, French and ELA teacher, and EL director, she founded Edquity Consulting to continue with this important work. Edquity supports districts with developing and implementing curriculum with best practices for MLs, implementing WIDA 2020 and creating compliance systems.

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# A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers

by Xiaolu Guo. Nan Talese, London. Doubleday, New York 2007. 283 pages. ISBN 978 0 385 520294

## Reviewed by Eileen Feldman

**A** **LTHOUGH THIS BOOK WAS SHORT-LISTED** for the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction, Xiaolu Guo (born in the Zhe Jiang province in southern China) noted it was based on the love between a real 23-year-old unmarried Chinese woman studying English for a year in London and the real British man she loved. Guo's main character makes keen and witty observations comparing English vocabulary, grammar, and culture with Chinese; a perspective that is enlightening to a Westerner.

So, this book can inform ELL teachers, general teachers, administrators, and counselors about a young adult ELL's journey in a new country, from confusion and loneliness to fluency and self-confidence. It can also be used for lessons on vocabulary, or to provide writing prompts for students.


The book is divided into fifteen very short chapters of a first-person narrative chronicling the woman's stay in London and defining a precise English word to express her feelings and experiences each time: *identity, prologue, alien, hostel, properly, fog, beginner, pronoun, tenses, homesick, misunderstanding, bachelor, charm, drifter, intimate, custom, romance, isolate, humor, migraine, frustration, discord, nostalgia, betray, expel, dilemma, timing, fatalism, epilogue*. Such poignant and evocative words capture the trajectory of her year abroad.

**Guo's main character makes keen and witty observations comparing English vocabulary, grammar, and culture with Chinese; a perspective that is enlightening to a Westerner. So, this book can inform [educators] about a young adult ELL's journey in a new country.**



Often, the Chinese character or cultural insight is included in the vocabulary journal she is keeping. For example, she writes, “Chinese we starting sentence from a concept of time or place...Is not the order of English. *I, Jake, Mary* by front of everything, supposing to be most important thing in whole sentence.” Additionally, letters between the woman and her boyfriend demonstrate how written communication is necessary in maintaining a relationship.

Written by a female who is experiencing her first love, this book might not resonate with some males in the class. A companion piece from the male point of view could be assigned to complement or substitute for this book. However, its vocabulary, grammar idiosyncrasies, and cultural concepts are universal and useful topics for discussions/essays/journals of comparison-contrast, exemplification, description, definition, and other rhetorical patterns.

A fast read, this book leaves lasting images of the travails of a young adult ELL who is experiencing independence, travel, lack of funds, disorientation, temptations, and hunger for the familiar as she simultaneously studies a new language. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Eileen Feldman** teaches ELLs at Bunker Hill Community College. She has an MA in Education from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL and a BA in Education from University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI.

### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Have you read a great book, watched an impactful film, or found a website or a set of instructional materials you're just itching to tell people about? If so, please consider sharing it in the Reviews section of *MATSOL Currents*! Reviews can be short and informal – the main aim is to share great resources with the community. To propose an idea for a review, please email the Editor at [currents@matsol.org](mailto:currents@matsol.org).

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