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Journal of Multilingual Education Research

Volume 11, 2021

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Journal of Multilingual Education Research

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Editorial

Socio-cultural and Educational Aspects of Multilingual Multicultural Learners and Communities

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New York University Steinhardt

Keywords: multilingual education, multilingual multicultural learners

In our “post-truth world,” (Peters, 2017), the importance of educational approaches based on research and equity cannot be overstated. Concomitantly, the question of how to support multilingual learners’ academic and psycho-social development successfully and compassionately continues to engender controversy in political and educational fora. While research overwhelmingly favors the use of the first language and a bilingual approach in teaching multilingual learners, many continue to oppose it, with views reported in the media dramatically less positive than the science would indicate (Lewis & Davies, 2018). Indeed, as Chinn, Barzilai and Duncan (2021) urge, we must accept the challenge of breakdowns in how we understand and analyze educational issues and develop “new directions for research and practice” (p. 51).

This volume of *JMER* represents a research-based consideration of several elements of language acquisition and use and seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how multilingual learners acquire and apply their knowledge of language and culture. Inspired by presentations at the annual Research Institute of the National Association for Bilingual Education, each paper addresses the process of how teachers, teachers in training, and/or multilingual learners can understand and enhance their development of communicative competence defined broadly as they approach an additional “languaculture” (Agar, 2006).

The three research-focused articles presented here each address learners of contrasting ages and backgrounds and incorporate teacher and/or learner voices as well as those of the researcher(s). Ebsworth, Ebsworth, and Cai (2021) use the lens of a critical incident to explore how university students from China confront a face threatening situation involving gossip. This sensitive dilemma is drawn from the participants’ experiences and uses a mixed design to capture contrasts in how the Chinese students and their American peers weigh alternative strategies and their implications. What is our responsibility to a friend who is not present about whom

others are gossiping? How do we balance honesty and sensitivity while considering the feelings of others in the group? There is no glossary of semantic formulas that will answer this question. Rather, teachers and learners must become researchers and observers of intercultural pragmatics. Individuals will resolve for themselves how to balance their own sense of what is “right” with how what they say may be interpreted by a member of a different sociolinguistic community. The interview portion of this research reveals how responses to such critical incidents encode socio-cultural norms and values along with their potential for either contributing to pragmatic failure or building bridges of understanding.

Young multicultural learners are the focus of Wu and Opstad’s (2021) study of “satellite children” (Bohr & Tse, 2009) who have been encultured in China by family members and then find themselves in the United States with their parents. These vulnerable youngsters require extraordinary understanding as they transition to a completely new existence, language, educational, and social universe. The insights offered by this research are invaluable not only for teachers and researchers but also to provide insights for building parental and community awareness of the support needed by children and families. If “it takes a village,” (Clinton, 1996) what are the roles of parents versus those of the extended family? How can all involved help ease the children’s transitions, both in advance of travel and once they have arrived? How can we use the affordances of technology to continue the contact with those who initially raised them? How can all stakeholders become positively engaged in this process?

Hurwich’s (2021) research looks at young high school women and their responses to biblical female figures when they are encountered through graphic novels as opposed to traditional biblical settings. How can such students be encouraged to utilize their agency to look critically at gender roles? While all reading involves a transaction between reader and writer (MacMillan, 2014), this special context adds a critical cultural and religious dimension. Presentation in the graphic novel format may allow young women to look at text more creatively and interactively. The implications of this work go far beyond the particular population and setting presented here by problematizing the issue of textual authority and the role of the second language reader in making meaning. Broader questions include: What do we do as a secular culture when gender roles prescribed through religious and cultural authority may be in conflict with values of equality in the secular world? How do such insights help us to transcend religious, cultural, and national boundaries while remaining respectful of cultural diversity?

The two practice-focused articles are also grounded in research. Zhou’s (2021) study considers what happens when a teacher is told to use a total immersion approach to teach content to students whose target language knowledge is insufficient to provide them with comprehensible input (Krashen, 2013). The “dual language” label of the program does not reveal its internal conflicts. This case study highlights the courage of a teacher who privileges students’ learning over institutional policy and uses a translanguaging approach (García et al., 2017) to help learners successfully understand complex content through their first language as underpinning to acquiring the needed information while learning how to use the target language to encode the content. Again, this issue transcends the specific setting and adds data-based support to the use of a

translanguaging approach so that learners can successfully draw on all resources to make meaning in both their first and second languages. It also concerns the dilemmas often faced by teachers when their experience, care for their learners, and basic common-sense contrast with policy that is simply not working (Harper & de Jong, 2009).

Cardenas Curiel and Ponzio's (2021) micro-ethnographic study also echoes the centrality of meaning in acquiring second language skills. In this case, an authentic genre-based form is used as an anchor for learners in developing their second language writing through an adaptation of the Writers' Workshop model (Calkins & Hartman, 2013) and the use of multimodal scaffolding to develop background knowledge. Learners were challenged to be creative while exploring a culturally embedded discourse event as a form of expression, namely a literary calavera, an authentic Latinx Spanish poetic form focused on a deceased individual associated with The Day of the Dead. Students were invited to enter the framework of the holiday through a multimedia approach, incorporating video and shared experiences to deepen cultural connection. Taking advantage of peer support and scaffolding, students drew a concept map reflecting this context that led to their creation of authentic texts in their second language. This paper illustrates the power of multimedia to engage learners and build background knowledge relevant to a discourse form associated with the holiday while taking advantage of support offered by peer interaction and translanguaging, and the production of a visual representation of shared understanding.

Finally, Martinez (2021) positively reviews the film series directed and produced by Kleyn (2019), *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* and the associated resource guide, also developed by Kleyn (2019). The films: *Key Immigration Issues*, *Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants*, *Immigration in Elementary Schools*, and *Immigration in Secondary Schools* highlight the voices of the students and their teachers, recent immigrants, and dreamers, providing a window to appreciate this vulnerable population. As explained by Martinez, the series is an invaluable tool to deepen our understanding as practitioners, leaders, and researchers while offering resources and practical suggestions for the development of culturally sustaining, psycho-socially sensitive, and trauma-informed pedagogy and interaction (Castellanos, 2018).

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Everybody Does It: The Pragmatics and Perceptions of International Chinese Graduate Students and their American Peers Regarding Gossip

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Integrating natural observation, interviews, and quantitative analysis, we used a mixed design to compare the socio-linguistic judgments of international Chinese students at a private University on the East Coast of the United States (US) with those of their native English-speaking peers regarding a critical incident involving gossip. Ninety-two participants evaluated alternative sociolinguistic strategies offered in addressing the incident on semantic differential scales. Judgments by each group regarding four alternative responses were surveyed and compared. Twenty participants, ten from each group, participated in semi-structured interviews. Themes were developed through a recursive process: interpretations were validated by a bilingual bicultural expert. Several distinctions in judgments emerged. The most preferred alternative to dealing with a group gossiping about a friend for Americans was to say honestly that it made them uncomfortable while Chinese participants preferred requesting a change in topic. Such contrasts were found to be representative of underlying sociocultural values for each group. Intercultural pragmatic distinctions such as these could lead to pragmatic failure and have the potential to interfere with the development of intercultural friendship among the members of the two groups. Implications for pedagogy and developing cross-cultural insight are offered.

Keywords: Chinese international students, Chinese versus American pragmatic judgments, critical incident, cross-cultural communication, gossip, intercultural pragmatics

Gossip is an insidious, nasty, and completely counter-productive behavior. Unfortunately, it's also a delicious, beguiling temptation because it reinforces our all too human desire...to belong and to be on the inside. (Davey, 2014, para. 1)

The contact among students of diverse subcultures in the United States (US) universities creates special opportunities and challenges for individuals who seek to negotiate effectively. Members of sociolinguistic and ethnic subcultural groups tend to display distinct subconscious linguistic norms and social values that affect the language they produce and the meanings they attribute to what others do and say (Gass & Neu, 1995; Heng, 2018). As Abelmann and Kang (2014) point out, such diversity has created a need for information that will promote effective communication in the professional, educational, political, and social fora that we share. Thus, researchers attempt to facilitate cross-cultural interaction by deconstructing both the process of communication and the values, assumptions, and perceptions of interlocutors. One of the most active groups of international students in the United States today comes from China (Huang, 2012). In fact in 2018/19, there were more than 369,000 Chinese students studying in the United States (Institution of International Education, 2019).

This project seeks to explore the English-language communication of international Chinese students with their native English speaking peers in a U.S. university setting. Here we report on a subset of our data, responses to a critical incident (CI) involving gossip, a complex, potentially face-threatening speech event. We have chosen this focus as it illuminates some of the challenges, conflicts, and choices involved when students from distinct cultures interact socially together. In the graduate programs at Urban University (pseudonym), a high percentage of the graduate students are international pre- and in-service teachers from China and many are studying the pedagogy of English and/or Mandarin as a second or foreign language.

It has been noted that often Chinese students at home and in the United States are highly successful academically (Ellicott, 2013; Li, 2017). Nevertheless, they encounter a range of sociolinguistic and pragmatic challenges in their interactions with native English speakers, both within the university setting and in their communication with other community members (Huang & Brown, 2009; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Snow, 2015; Zhou, 2010). A typical Chinese international student comments, "...I feel that I (pause), I haven't reached the goal of my studies here. I'm here to study, not simply for a degree, but here to understand the culture. But given my current state... I have few foreign friends..." (Heng, 2018, p. 31). Why are such relationships problematic? Through an examination of contrasting norms of behavior across U.S. and Chinese students, we seek to enhance the possibility of greater mutual acceptance among members of these communities in contact (Andrade, 2006), while providing insights of a more general nature regarding the communicative strategies of multicultural people.

Using a mixed design, this study employed the lens of intercultural pragmatics to understand the intended meanings of participants and their perspectives on the messages sent by other interlocutors as they consider alternative strategies for addressing situations in which knowing what to say and do can be socially sensitive. We begin by considering the insights offered by previous studies, followed by our research

approach. After presenting and discussing the findings we identify key implications for practice and future research.

Background

Intercultural Pragmatics

A considerable literature exists documenting the sociocultural and linguistic aspects of intercultural pragmatic patterns, ranging from the seminal work of Kluckhohn (1954) to the research reported in Gass and Neu (1995), Heng (2018), Tateyama (2008), Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2016), and Yang (2019). Dicker's (1996) volume on language in the US stressed the richness of our multiethnic society, with its kaleidoscope of languages, language varieties, and cultures. Indeed, a sense of the complexity inherent in this nation's evolving cultural and communicative systems is found in texts such as those of González et al. (1996), García (1994), Sharifian (2015), and O'Keeffe et al. (2019). The effects of gender roles (Watson, 2012) and relative social status (Ellwardt et al., 2012) have also been considered.

Goddard and Ye (2015) discuss ethno-pragmatics highlighting the connection between community-specific speech practices and the cultural norms and values contrasting Anglo-English and Chinese cultures. Yang (2019) presents the construct of *lǐmào* (礼貌). "Chinese politeness including respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement" (Yang, background information, para. 15). This underscores the values inherent in Chinese pragmatics which are likely to differ to some degree when compared with mainstream notions of politeness in the US (Jia, 2007). Such differences are amplified when interlocutors engage in face-threatening acts, such as responding to gossip (Redmond, 2015; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Watson (2012) notes that in both gossip and friendship individuals from cultures that favor more individualism versus those that privilege more collectivist values may experience challenges associated with this contrast.

Orton (2006) investigated the reactions of both Chinese and English-speaking academics to video clips of Chinese students using English in China. Orton recorded the responses of 10 Chinese and 10 native English-language academics to 20 video clips of Chinese students speaking English in monologue and conversational modes. Responses of the instructors were examined using a 4-item questionnaire with both open-ended and closed items. Participants responded not only to the language used but also to non-verbal aspects of communication. Results showed that while many features were in play, the kinesic aspects were especially challenging for the Chinese English speakers and contributed to the impressions formed by others. Orton interpreted these findings to underscore the importance of the social use of language by learners and the need for more research regarding judgments of second language pragmatics.

Bardovi-Harlig and Gass (2002) comment that research-derived descriptions of native-speaker usage have already begun to form the basis of materials developed for the teaching of some languages; they also suggest that "research in the acquisition of second language pragmatics and native-speaker judgements of interlanguage forms remains to be done" (p. 11). Here we focus on a CI involving gossip. Bloom (2004) highlights the potential of research on gossip as a "scientifically rich" domain that can

reveal important social norms and group dynamics in particular contexts. “Gossip is... universal... uniquely human... and plays a crucial social role” (p. 138). Participation in gossip is considered a gateway to group solidarity and membership (Ellwardt et al., 2012) and challenging gossip can be a face-threatening act (Al-Hindawi & Abukrooz, 2013).

As meanings are expressed in part through language, ethnographers and sociolinguists have underscored the important role played by linguistic and sociocultural factors in communicative competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1982; Bi, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980; Goffman, 1981; Gu, 1990; Hymes, 1972). Further, cross-cultural variables have been identified as important in the potential for “sociopragmatic failure,” misunderstood messages resulting in communication breakdown (House, 1993; Tateyama, 2008), which may cause or reinforce negative stereotypes (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). It is not common for politeness to be viewed as universal and people often are unaware that differences in language and culture can change what is considered appropriate to say and do by individuals from a particular culture within the context of a specific situation. When the expectations of a speech community are violated by a member of another, that individual may be perceived as impolite or uncaring rather than somebody who is simply being polite according to the norms of a different language, variety, or community. Furthermore, relevant variables may crucially affect successful pragmatic choices in real-life contexts such as social distance, relative power of interlocutors and the degree of obligations incurred when performing particular speech acts (Yang, 2019).

Yuan et al. (2015), through questionnaire and focus group interview data, revealed that while Chinese university students learning English often had limited pragmatic competence in English, they recognized its importance and were positively disposed towards acquiring it. Over 65% of the 237 student respondents agreed that pragmatic knowledge was just as important as linguistic knowledge in language learning.

Chinese Students Studying Abroad

We also note that the Chinese community of learners in the United States represents substantial sociolinguistic diversity. It is composed of native speakers of Mandarin and also bilingual or polylingual speakers of local varieties or languages as well as Mandarin. All participants in our study were fluent in Mandarin and had at least high intermediate proficiency in English (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012).

There is copious research documenting the contrast in academic processes and interactive norms in Chinese versus American and other Anglo settings (Turner, 2006; Wu, 2015; Yan & Berliner, 2009). However, social interaction presents its own challenges. In their study of Chinese students in higher education in Australia, Robertson et al. (2000) noted that Chinese students struggled with colloquial language in English and experienced feelings of isolation. Cho et al. (2008), whose focus was on Chinese students in U.S. accounting and business programs, also reported that Chinese learners expressed discomfort with local U.S. norms and values. One student explained that after study he planned to return to China because, “I don’t think my soul belongs

here” (p. 204). As generally reflected in scholarship here and in China, Cho et al. report that students have been socialized to Confucian values and Chinese culture, with a more collective rather than individual orientation.

Heng (2018) followed 18 Chinese students in a U.S. college over the period of one year. This research emphasized the complexity of the sociocultural and psychosocial context and was premised on the agency students possessed as they interacted and could adapt or contest the “values beliefs, and behavior associated with different sociocultural contexts” (p. 24). Use of English was the most frequently mentioned challenge for the students in the U.S. setting. Their academic study of English abroad did not prepare them for conversational interaction, and they characterized their conversational English usage as often inappropriate or stilted. Although they reported improvement over the course of a year, half of the participants continued to “experience some discomfort.”

Kingston and Forland (2008) report the experiences of Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom. Additional insights are offered by Gram et al. (2013), Wang and Shan (2007), Parris-Kidd and Barnett (2011), and Wu (2015). The work of Yang (2019) considers politeness from the perspective of U.S. English speakers using Mandarin in China, thus providing a useful contrast for members of both communities. In a special issue of *Applied Linguistics*, Jin and Cortazzi (2011) explore research on Chinese learners, presenting the importance of an in-depth consideration that reflects the diversity of this community and the need to exercise care in presenting generalizations regarding Chinese learners. Jia (2007) identifies conflicts between native speakers of English in the US and Chinese visitors, indicating how the “Anglo-American standard at the pragmatic level” can result in misinterpretations and misunderstandings when members of both communities communicate in English. Jia found that such examples of pragmatic failure had the potential of destroying friendships or preventing them from forming at all.

In our study, the communicative judgments of international Chinese students (ICS) will be compared to those of native English speakers from the United States who do not claim Chinese descent (USS). We consider the possibility that relationships among ICS and USS graduate students may include instances of pragmatic failure. Furthermore, the importance of such instances may be amplified when a conversation involves a potentially face-threatening act such as gossip.

What Is Gossip?

The following definition of gossip includes widely accepted elements that characterize it in the literature: “Gossip is the exchange of personal information (positive or negative) in an evaluative way... about absent third parties” (Foster, 2004). Three elements that have been identified as necessary for gossip to take place include acquaintance among the gossipers and with the third party, absence of the third party, and the presumption of privacy regarding the conversation (Bergmann, 1993; Franks & Attia, 2011). Gossip can be casual or trivial (Rosnow, 2001), has the capacity to provide entertainment (Hedge, 2019), and can also cement relationships among the gossipers (Spires, 2015). Gossip can be implied or explicit, and while it does indeed have the potential to be neutral or positive (Noon & Delbridge, 1993), most gossip has been

found to be negative or critical (Eggins & Slade, 1997) and can even be malicious (Dunbar et al., 1997). Perreau de Pinnick et al.'s (2008) model of social norm enforcement identifies gossip as a strategy to sanction and ostracize individuals whose actions are contrary to social norms of behavior. This perspective is echoed in the work of Feinberg et al. (2012) who frame gossip as a form of punishment for anti-social behavior.

Stages of gossip that have been identified in the literature: Stage 1 consists of an invitation to engage in gossip. Stage 2 involves a focus on the person being gossiped about and a frame of the topic or behavior evaluated. It has been noted that this second stage affirms "shared attitudes and values as the basis for shared evaluations" (Franks & Attia, 2011, p. 172.) The third stage consists of discussion including negative evaluations around a theme that can be individually or jointly developed. (See also Wert & Salovey, 2004). Of course, substantial variation revolves around these parameters (Baumeister et al., 2004), and the veracity of the statements made can be open to question (Kuttler et al., 2002). On a more positive note, Baumeister et al. (2004) comment that one function of gossip is that it can provide for cultural learning and often incorporates social comparison and understanding (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Nevertheless, to join the gossip you have to opt in. In contrast, there may be repercussions if you opt out of this potentially social bonding event.

While we acknowledge that gossip can potentially provide useful cultural information, this is not the initial presumption the CI reported in our study, where problematic commentary seems to be implied. This assumption is discussed by Baumeister et al. (2004), who reported that "gossip tends to make people react with negative emotions in the majority of cases, but positive emotional reactions also occur" (p. 118).

Challenging Gossip

First, gossip is organized in a manner such that hearers are constrained to support the point of the gossip and not challenge it (Eder & Enke, 1991). Gossip primarily takes the form of conveying a piece of information that is heard by others and then confirmed without question. Regarding challenges to gossip: "...gossip tends to proceed, unchallenged for the most part, from story to story" (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 129). Furthermore, in their analysis of gossip in naturalistic settings, Eder and Enke (1991) found that if a hearer does not challenge the point being made during the next speaking turn, there will be no subsequent challenges to the gossip" (p. 116).

Gossip is officially discouraged by many cultures. In fact, describing others in negative terms to others when they are not present is not only against overtly stated social norms but also is viewed as a prohibited behavior by many religious communities (Yerkovich, 1977). Indeed, gossip is often a violation of peoples' personal principles. Yet, "against their better judgment, individuals often find themselves engaged in negative or even malicious discussions about peers, colleagues, or community members in their absence" (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 122). In a review of anthropological and sociological studies conducted by Bergmann (1993), the most common topics of gossip were "personal qualities and idiosyncrasies, behavioral surprises and inconsistencies, character flaws, discrepancies between actual behavior and moral claims, bad manners,

socially unaccepted modes of behavior, shortcomings, improprieties, omissions, presumptions, blamable mistakes, misfortunes, and failures” (Bergman, 1993, p. 15). At first, this list appears to suggest a preoccupation with complaining about our companions and community members. But further consideration reveals another common and related theme, that of evaluation. Each of these topics proceeds from an evaluation or a comparison. “Gossipers make a comparison between the person they are talking about and some social or egocentric reference point, such as social norms or their own perspective and behaviors” (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 123).

Gossip and Friendship

Participation in gossip is socially complex to the degree that those who gossip are engaging in common but questionable behavior which when challenged can entail a face-threatening act. There may also be the possibility for guilt associated with the realization of the cost to those who are being gossiped about (Griffin, 2019). Highlighting the need for additional studies on gossip, Foster’s research (2004) demonstrated that gossip could promote the development of collegiality while it might also reinforce inequality and conflict across social groups. Foster (2004) used a “Gossip Functions Questionnaire.” Items probed areas of gossip and friendship, personal behavior regarding gossip, and feelings experienced by the respondent about being party to gossip. Of particular relevance to our study is the item regarding “being around people who talk about other people behind their backs” (p. 99). A “Tendency to Gossip” Questionnaire was constructed in Hebrew and translated to English by Nevo et al. (1994). Created in Israel, it was aimed at college students. A version considered appropriate for use in the United States was also developed. Areas measured included: physical appearance, social information, achievements of others, and affective dimensions referred to as “sublimated” gossip.

Our study contributes to the conversation through the use of a critical incident, also framed by Wilson et al. (2000) as a “hypothetical vignette.” However, the situation described to our participants was actually reported in our data by an individual we interviewed in the development stage of our project. We chose examples that were considered to be problematic situations in which it was difficult or delicate to choose a response that would result in a satisfactory outcome to all concerned.

Research Questions

1. How do selected ICS (international Chinese students) and USS (U.S. students) display their language and culture in their evaluation of sociolinguistic alternatives to a critical incident involving gossip?
2. What contrasts are observed between ICS and USS participants regarding their preferred responses to the gossip situation?
3. What explanations are offered in participant interviews to explain ICS and USS preferences?
4. How can we use this information to promote better mutual understanding and acceptance?

Method

Participants

Our participants, at the time of the study, were enrolled graduate students from Urban University (pseudonym), a large private higher education institution located in the Northeastern United States. These volunteers were primarily from middle or upper-class backgrounds though a few could be characterized as upwardly mobile with working-class roots. Among the 46 Chinese participants, there were nine male students and 37 female students. Their ages ranged between 21 and 29, with an average of 23.0. All speak Standard Mandarin as their first or second language (with an alternative Chinese variety as 1st language) and have at least a high intermediate level of English proficiency based on American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) guidelines. Twelve of them have also learned other foreign languages to some degree. American-born Chinese students were excluded from the study.

Among the 46 US native speakers of English participants, there were six male students and 40 female students. Their ages ranged between 22 and 55, with an average of 30.3. All US participants speak English as their first language. Thirty of them claim fluency in at least one foreign language. Only one had studied a Chinese language (Mandarin) and self-rated his proficiency as 4 on a 1-5 scale.

Positionality of Researchers

The first author, Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth, is a university professor in Multilingual Multicultural Studies. An English-dominant native speaker of Yiddish, her additional languages include Hebrew, French, and Spanish; she is currently studying Pǔtōnghuà (Mandarin Chinese). She has been involved in language education and research for over forty years and believes that all languages and varieties are valuable.

The second author, Timothy John Ebsworth, is a native of Wales, and is bilingual in English and Spanish. He has also lived in England and Puerto Rico, and currently resides and teaches in the mainland United States. He has extensive experience as a college ESL teacher, language teacher educator and researcher in intercultural pragmatics and applied linguistics. He is a passionate proponent of bilingualism and bilingual education.

The third author, Chencen Cai, is currently a researcher at The Center for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in China. A native of Mainland China with previous study and teaching experiences in Hong Kong and the United States, she is polylingual in Guilin Fāngyán, Mandarin Chinese, and English and has achieved intermediate proficiency in Cantonese. Based on her multilingual/multicultural experiences, she is interested in researching issues related to second language acquisition, language variation, and cross-cultural communication. She affirms the importance of all languages and varieties.

Research Design and Data Analysis

Our study utilized a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), adapted from the work of Ebsworth and Ebsworth (2000). As noted above, judgments of responses to a critical incident (CI), a situation with potential for cross-cultural

misunderstanding (Brislin et al., 1986; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010), are used here as a lens for the analysis of common and distinctive norms for language use and associated cultural behavior. Derived from natural observation, ethnographic interviews, and the literature, the situations and responses presented to participants in our study were contextualized to include information about language used and nonverbal aspects of communication.

In the original study, participants responded to four alternative solutions to each of five critical incidents. Here we present the incident involving gossip in which the respondent must evaluate four proposed solutions derived from our research on 23 semantic differential scales, each representing a pair of opposite adjectives. The polarity of the scales (positive vs. negative) was randomly reversed so that each alternative would be evaluated independently. The polarity for all adjectives was subsequently recalculated for analysis so that 1=most negative and 7=most positive).

The following CI was presented to each participant:

“You are chatting with friends. The friends are talking about people you know and commenting critically on their relationships which makes you uncomfortable. You feel that this is gossip and you want to avoid it.”

The possible reactions to this CI presented to participants were:

Response 1 (Appearing Agreeable): Feeling concerned, I will join the conversation because I don't want to be isolated from my friends, although I feel uncomfortable talking about such topics. Since I am not confident in my expressions, I may just show my agreement with my friends and try to continue the conversation by making general comments. I say, “Really? That surprises me!”

Response 2 (False Excuse for Leaving): I don't like gossiping, so I just leave the conversation and stay aside for a while. I pretend that I have to use the bathroom and I excuse myself, hoping that the topic will be different when I return. I say, “Excuse me, I need the bathroom for a second. I'll be right back.” If the topic hasn't changed, I will find a pretext to leave and not return at that time.

Response 3 (Trying to Change the Topic): I think it is not respectful to talk about others' relationships in this way. I may raise a new topic and try to get my friends' attention. At the first opportunity in the conversation, I say, “Hey! Has anyone seen the new movie XXX (name)? ...”

Response 4 (The Honest Approach): I do not like participating in this kind of gossip. I decide to be honest with my friends and request a change of topic (If they continue anyway, I excuse myself). I say, “Listen guys, this is making me really uncomfortable. XXX (name) is/are my friend(s). Can we change the topic please?”

The above four alternative responses to the Gossip CI were presented in randomized order to the participants.

The data were viewed from a cross-cultural perspective that incorporates the way members of each group interpret their own language and behavior as well as that of the other group(s). While the quantitative component of this research was elicited through English, the contact language typically used between ICS and USS (native U.S.) peers, interviews had two functions. Initially, they were used along with natural

observation to develop the quantitative instrument. Semi-structured post-hoc interviews (Seidman, 2006) were also important for data interpretation and insights. These were conducted by the third author, Chencen Cai, in the language(s) most comfortable for the interviewee (Mandarin, English, or both) in order to promote freedom of expression and clarity of communication as some expressions may be difficult for bilingual respondents to translate (Ohta & Prior, 2019; Ryen, 2001). The interpretation of all data incorporates the views of native informants from each community, the three authors, and the analysis of a bicultural expert, a professional educator who has lived successfully in the United States and in Mainland China.

Limitations

The researchers recognize that only Chinese students who are relatively bilingual in English and Mandarin are represented in this study; the degree to which the views of monolingual speakers of Chinese varieties are reflected here must await further investigation. In addition, since participants are pre- or in-service teachers, and 30 of the USS have working knowledge of a second language, we cannot extrapolate to the views of USS who do not speak a second language. Finally, as noted above, US-born Chinese students were not included in this study.

Quantitative Results

We first considered the appropriate approach to analyzing the quantitative data. While there is a debate regarding whether semantic differential scale data should be treated as interval or ordinal (Laerd Statistics, 2019), we have taken the more conservative view and are treating it as ordinal. The current sample satisfies all the assumptions of the Mann-Whitney U test which was found to be appropriate for comparing Chinese and US students' judgments of the four options suggested as possible responses to the gossip situation.

Although we began with 23 scales, we eliminated four in pilot testing, namely unmasculine/masculine, unfeminine/feminine, unassertive/assertive, and usual/unusual. We discovered that notions of masculinity and femininity tended to be interpreted differently in each culture and could not be quantitatively compared in a meaningful way. Further, the notion of assertiveness was interpreted to be a somewhat positive descriptor by USS but a somewhat negative one by Chinese respondents, and the usual/unusual dimension was unclear to some members of both groups.

We also found that several of the scales were significantly correlated (Spearman's Rho). This left us with six scales to consider in the final quantitative analysis.

- Bad/good (correlated with: ineffective/effective; negative/positive; unintelligent/intelligent)
- Immature/mature (correlated with nonaggressive/aggressive; uncontrolled/controlled)
- Inconsiderate/considerate (correlated with uncooperative/cooperative; unfriendly/friendly)

- Offensive/inoffensive (correlated with inappropriate/appropriate; discourteous/courteous; disrespectful/respectful; unsympathetic/sympathetic)
- Passive/active (direct/indirect; submissive/unsubmissive)
- Face-threatening/not face-threatening

Descriptive statistics appear below.

Table 1

Response 1 Appearing Agreeable: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	Chinese			American			Total		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Bad--good	46	3.87	1.24	46	3.74	1.20	92	3.80	1.22
Immature--mature	46	3.72	1.50	46	3.83	1.60	92	3.77	1.54
Inconsiderate--considerate	46	4.46	1.44	46	4.13	1.44	92	4.29	1.44
Offensive--inoffensive	46	4.13	2.04	46	3.83	1.50	92	3.98	1.79
Passive--active	46	2.74	1.60	46	2.13	1.22	92	2.43	1.45
Face-threat--not face-threat	46	4.93	1.50	46	5.50	1.44	92	5.22	1.49

Regarding the *Appearing Agreeable* option, no significant statistical differences were found between groups. Both rated this option as slightly negative on bad/good, and maturity. They each considered it somewhat passive, not very face threatening and slightly considerate. While the mean for USS showed that they regarded this option as slightly offensive and Chinese on average judged it to be slightly inoffensive, this difference did not reach significance based on the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 2

Response 2 False Excuse for Leaving: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	Chinese			American			Total		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Bad--good	46	4.96	1.21	46	4.70	1.56	92	4.83	1.40
Immature--mature	46	4.57	1.46	46	4.46	1.56	92	4.51	1.50
Inconsiderate--considerate	46	4.80	1.36	46	4.96	1.41	92	4.88	1.38
Offensive--inoffensive	46	4.02	1.68	46	4.85	1.67	92	4.43	1.72
Passive--active	46	4.02	1.78	46	3.35	1.99	92	3.68	1.91
Face-threat--not face-threat	46	4.98	1.39	46	5.39	1.39	92	5.18	1.40

Regarding the strategy of presenting a *False Excuse for Leaving*, only one option showed a significant between-group difference, namely degree of offensiveness (Mann-Whitney U=796.0, $p = .037$). While the Chinese participants were close to neutral in their judgments on this scale, their USS peers found this to be slightly less offensive. Other evaluations of this option had both groups in agreement, finding it somewhat

good, somewhat mature, somewhat considerate, and not very face threatening. Though the USS scored it a bit more positively as less face threatening, this apparent difference did not reach statistical significance. While the Chinese students rated this option near neutral on activeness, the USS participants thought this was relatively more passive. Nevertheless, the between-group difference of this scale did not reach statistical significance.

Table 3

Response 3 Trying to Change the Topic: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	Chinese			American			Total		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Bad--good	46	5.41	1.36	46	5.17	1.31	92	5.29	1.33
Immature--mature	46	5.22	1.32	46	5.30	1.23	92	5.26	1.27
Inconsiderate--considerate	46	5.28	1.38	46	5.35	1.34	92	5.32	1.35
Offensive--inoffensive	46	4.17	1.89	46	5.11	1.57	92	4.64	1.79
Passive--active	46	6.00	1.01	46	5.33	1.54	92	5.66	1.34
Face-threat--not face-threat	46	4.43	1.66	46	5.13	1.66	92	4.78	1.68

Regarding the strategy of *Trying to Change the Topic*, three between-group differences were found to be significant, namely offensiveness (Mann-Whitney $U=754.0$, $p=.016$), passive/active (Mann-Whitney $U=799.5$, $p=.036$), and face-threatening/not face-threatening (Mann-Whitney $U=795.0$, $p=.036$). Though neither group rated it as offensive, USS found it significantly more inoffensive. In addition, while both groups rated this strategy as somewhat active, Chinese participants rated it to be relatively more active than their USS peers. Furthermore, while both groups believed that this option was not face-threatening, USS considered it relatively less face-threatening. Both groups found this option somewhat good, somewhat mature, and somewhat considerate.

Table 4

Response 4 The Honest Approach: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	Chinese			American			Total		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Bad--good	46	3.54	1.63	46	5.59	1.41	92	4.57	1.83
Immature--mature	46	3.78	1.62	46	6.24	1.25	92	5.01	1.90
Inconsiderate--considerate	46	3.57	1.59	46	5.54	1.44	92	4.55	1.81
Offensive--inoffensive	46	3.33	1.49	46	4.43	1.81	92	3.88	1.74
Passive--active	46	5.78	1.52	46	6.52	.86	92	6.15	1.28
Face-threat--not face-threat	46	2.74	1.51	46	3.43	1.76	92	3.09	1.67

Regarding the strategy of *The Honest Approach*, the Chinese and USS groups differed significantly on all semantic differential scales. Chinese students found it slightly bad while USS found it somewhat good (Mann-Whitney $U=377.0$, $p<0.001$),

Chinese students found it somewhat immature and somewhat inconsiderate while USS rated it highly on maturity and found it to be somewhat considerate (Mann-Whitney $U=253.5$, $p < .001$ and Mann-Whitney $U=386.0$, $p < .001$). Chinese participants saw it as slightly offensive while USS found it slightly inoffensive (Mann-Whitney $U=718.5$, $p = .007$). Both found it active, but USS did so to a greater degree (Mann-Whitney $U=759.5$, $p = .009$). Both groups rated this as posing a threat to face, with USS interpreting this strategy as a threat to face to a lesser degree than their Chinese peers (Mann-Whitney $U=804.0$, $p = .043$).

We note that on the bad/good evaluation, the groups rated the four options from most positive to most negative as follows:

American Preferences

1. Honest approach
2. Change the topic
3. False excuse for leaving
4. Appear agreeable

Chinese Preferences

1. Change the topic
2. False excuse for leaving
3. Appear agreeable
4. Honest approach

We found it most provocative that the favorite USS choice, *The Honest Approach*, was the one least favored by the Chinese. We will explore these differences further below. Our interview data helps to illuminate the norms and values of participants that contribute to their reactions to the proposed responses to the CI.

Qualitative Data

When interviewees were asked to rank order their preferences regarding the four alternative strategies, their choices were consistent with the quantitative results. A majority of the USS ranked the honest approach as their first choice, while a majority of the Chinese participants ranked this as their last choice.

Recursive analysis followed by triangulation of interpretation produced the following themes. Due to space limitations, only one or two typical quotations are offered to illustrate participant voices. Themes below are grouped by those shared by both groups, those more typical of USS, those more typical of Chinese participants, and minority voices from each group. All participant names presented below are pseudonyms.

Shared Themes

As indicated in the quantitative data and confirmed in the interviews, we discovered some commonalities in the views of several participants from each group. These themes included the following:

1. **Gossip happens.** A majority of USS and Chinese interviewees shared that situations involving gossip were a common part of their social experience. For example, Tova stated, "I feel like gossip is something that is very natural." Zhixiang also affirmed, "This (gossip) happens a lot in real life."
2. **Gossiping is a bad idea.** Many interviewees in each group expressed that gossiping was viewed in their cultures as a negative activity, one which should be avoided if possible. This value was frequently stated by participants, both in local and universal terms. Norma commented, "It's an American cultural

value knowing to not partake in gossip.” Similarly, Hua reflected, “In Chinese culture, I think in any culture, it is not very good to gossip.”

- 3. Personality will affect one’s strategy.** Many interviewees addressed this issue. Some spoke about how their own personalities would influence their decision on how to behave. Emily personalized her preference, “Personality-wise... I’m a more direct person.” Xiaolu took a different approach, “...I think my personality is I won’t tell them directly that I don’t feel comfortable about the topic.” More general statements regarding the personalities of others were also ubiquitous. For example, Megan commented, “Some people are not confrontational.”

It was also noted that on occasion an individual’s personality might override a general cultural proclivity. Adina noted, “Americans hate conflict, except for the ones that love it!” Huiting added, “I think this is related to personality. Some people can be very direct. They may be very angry and say, “How can you say this?”

- 4. The nature of the gossip matters.** Many comments from both groups reflected on the importance of the content and intention of the gossip itself. Was it frivolous, catty, or did it reveal a serious breach? Was the purpose of the gossip to elicit empathy? Shelly commented, “If someone’s talking about how somebody hurt them or did something to them personally, and they wanna vent their frustrations about how they were treated, that’s different to me.” Cheryl mentioned, “If the gossip is sounding really mean, I would not like to include myself in those things.” Finally, Jing offered, “I may not speak directly unless this issue makes me feel very angry or offended.”
- 5. Relationships will affect strategies.** Both groups noted that the nature of their relationships with stakeholders were involved in determining choices. “I don’t really know the person they’re gossiping about, and I don’t really know them that well either. In that case I just might stay quiet because I don’t have as much at stake, even if I’m uncomfortable,” Emily said. Tova also expressed concern about maintaining a relationship with the gossipers, “I don’t want my friends to feel like I’m judging them.” Some Chinese interviewees’ comments on this theme were parallel to those of their USS peers. Yaxin expressed, “If we (the gossipers) are not close, I may just want to listen.”
- 6. Give gossipers the benefit of a doubt; do not judge them.** Several participants commented on this issue. Huiting explained, “Since I don’t know what happened between them and this person, maybe it is something which violates the principles and is very bad.” Moran commented, “I would just be agreeable, but I won’t be judgmental.”

USS Themes

The following themes were derived from explicit comments made by USS in our interviews. (We are unable to say definitively the degree to which the perspectives and values offered by the participants might not have also resonated with the alternative group.)

- 1. Honesty and directness are valued.** Many U.S. interviewees addressed this norm. Sam stated, “I’ll be honest. I need to say, Alicia is my friend. I don’t want to talk about her. I feel uncomfortable.” Emily was philosophical and referred to what she was taught, “Honesty, it’s better for everybody. It’s better for the friend they’re talking about, it’s better for them because they understand that it’s making you uncomfortable and they hopefully wouldn’t want to do that... I guess I was kind of taught to speak your mind as long as you can back it up.”
- 2. Loyalty goes with friendship.** Often U.S. participants expressed that they felt a responsibility to defend an absent friend and associated doing so with loyalty. “...at least I’m loyal”. Sam explained, “You know if someone is my friend, and I think they’re a good person, I’ll defend their name. I will defend them.”
- 3. Responsibility to say gossip is wrong.** Several USS felt a responsibility not only to their absent friend, but also to the group who is gossiping. Adina clarified, “(Friends) have the right to know that what they’re doing is making me uncomfortable. I have a responsibility to set them straight.”
- 4. Privacy boundaries should be respected.** U.S. participants drew our attention to the value of privacy. For example, Shelly expressed, “Criticizing each other over stuff that’s none of our business-I think that’s disgusting...”
- 5. Recognizing the relationship of culture and threat to face.** USS respondents often commented that cultures differ regarding this issue and tied their projected behavior to local norms. Joanne expressed the thought that “we don’t really save face here that much... in American culture.”
- 6. White lies and real lies.** U.S. participants were less comfortable with telling a white lie to extract themselves from the gossip situation. In evaluating the white lie option, Emily was among those who stated simply “I hate to lie.”
- 7. Consequences of not confronting the gossip.** Megan explained, “Leaving, it’s the safest route, but I feel like it’s going to accomplish the least.” Sam also focused on outcomes, “Leaving does not help. I need to fix the problem.”
- 8. Gender.** Interestingly, gender was alluded to by participants in terms of stereotypes rather than what people really do. For example, Tova commented, “Gender has a role to play as well in that there’s that image of women gossiping around a table.”
- 9. Age.** A few USS suggested that there may be a shift in culture over time and felt that more indirect choices might be more typical of older individuals. Norma suggested, “It might be more typical of people that are older in age...” Joanne talked about how age might influence the likelihood of gossip itself, “I really don’t do this a lot, because my life is at such a different point. There’s not a lot of gossip time. I understand that people still do that, but it’s not like when it was younger, in high school or college.”

Chinese Themes

The following themes were developed through explicit comments made by the Chinese participants.

1. **All people's feelings matter a lot.** Xiaolu elaborated, "I want to take care of both sides... I'm affected by the Chinese value, the feelings of any people **(matter)**... I would choose Response 2 **(leave)** because it is affected by the Chinese value, which is not to hurt the feeling of any people... I don't want to let the friends who I'm chatting with feel that I don't like their topic or I'm different from them... But on the other side they are talking about something that I don't really want to talk about. I'd rather leave the conversation..."
2. **Indirectness is related to saving face.** Hua stated, "I prefer indirect approaches because it's a conversation between friends so I shouldn't be too direct and we should save each other's face, we shouldn't let others lose face." Similarly, Jing explained, "I like to be more indirect, yes, yes. I may not be that intentional or let people realize immediately that oh, you don't like this...I think when I am making choices, I am more affected by Chinese culture."
3. **White lies can be OK.** Xiaolu said simply, "I'll pretend I have some other things to do." Yuzhe echoed this approach, "I will find an excuse, such as making a phone call. I will not participate **(in the gossip)**."
4. **Gossiping is not so serious.** A number of Chinese respondents felt that this incident was not of great consequence. Yuzhe reflected, "That kind of chatting is not very personal and we should not care about this too much, it is OK to chat on the surface. I may prioritize the first one, **(appear agreeable)**."
5. **Avoid conflicts.** Hua was among those who explicitly talked about avoiding confrontation, "Being indirect, because they are all friends, no matter what kind of friends, I should not quarrel with them openly." Huiting excluded the honest approach as a good choice, "This (direct strategy) is very embarrassing." Yaxin was categorical, "I think definitely no one will choose 4 **(the honest approach)**."
6. **Social relationships can limit choices.** Hua was among those who explained that the presence of a higher status individual would limit choice, "If one of the gossipers is 'lǐngdǎo' **(□ □, a leader)**, I will not be free to disagree or even leave. I will have to stay silent." This power dynamic of the listener's relationship to the gossipers was unique to the Chinese interviewees.
Moran shared a similar feeling about communicating with people of a higher social status, "I think I will leave the conversation **(Response 2)**. Since I would like to leave a good impression on my parents or other elderly **(senior)** people, I don't want to make them feel that I have biases for gossiping or others. In China, the status of elderly **(senior)** people is higher, which is not like between friends."
7. **Limits on command of English can affect choice.** An interesting insight regarded the constraints imposed on a listener whose options are limited by their second language proficiency. Suling pointed out, "If these are Chinese

friends, the possibility of 4 (**the honest approach**) will be higher, because I can express clearly using the language and I know how to express opinions without offending them. However, with American friends, since I cannot express clearly in English, by taking choice 4, I may leave a bad impression on this group of friends." Yaxin took a similar stance, "If I speak Chinese, I may directly say, 'Do you think what we have said may be a bit inappropriate?'"

8. Gossiping is interesting. Some Chinese participants acknowledged that gossip can have its positive aspects. Huiting admitted, "I like gossips and would like to know what others think about that person or whether there is something I don't know."

9. Gossiping as spying. Yaxin was among those who thought that staying to hear what is being said can be potentially useful, "As for appearing agreeable, as long as I am listening, it is OK if I have learned something... I can secretly tell that friend about what others have talked about you!"

Minority Voices

While the majority of individuals within groups made consistent comments, these were not always universal. The following minority opinions were among those expressed:

Chinese Participants

One minority view shared by one Chinese participant is that when communicating with family or close friends, they would choose a more direct strategy. As Yuzhe commented, "If these are close friends and they have heard some gossips and discuss in our group, I may choose the 4th one, which is to speak directly, because I don't think expressing my opinions will affect our friendship."

USS Participants

Some USS participants, like their Chinese peers, balanced honesty with concern for people's feelings. As Stella said, "Trying to change the topic of the conversation is a way for me to remain with the group of people I'm with."

Despite a generally positive view of the honest approach, in some cases directness was associated by U.S. participants with discomfort that could lead to misunderstanding. Joanne explained, "...People that are really direct like that, sometimes they just come across the wrong way." This is echoed in Stella's comment, "I think that, as much as in America we wanna be direct and clear, we do have an understanding that either going with the flow when things are not okay, or being direct like in Response 4, might make people uncomfortable."

The next section explores insights that emerge from an integration of the quantitative and qualitative data.

Discussion

First, it is important to note commonalities among the participants. Students from both groups affirm that gossip is a normal aspect of their social experience and one which is generally viewed from a negative perspective. Nevertheless, participants

acknowledge that the personality of the listener will interact with and sometimes overcome the social constraints that may be involved in this culturally complex activity.

In addition, it is generally recognized by most participants that they perceived a need to balance several factors in approaching the gossip, including allegiances to the absent friend as well as the group that is present and engaged in the conversation. The strength of the various relationships will count in the decision of the listener as will the content of the information conveyed and its potential seriousness. Chinese and U.S. interlocutors consider issues of risk to their continued relationships with the gossipers and the absent friend. As Erickson et al. (2011) affirm, human practices are much more complicated than passive adherence to any system of cultural norms of behavior.

Nevertheless, in weighing the complex variables informing their projections of how they would behave in the gossip situation, the majority of participants from each group contrast not only in their preferences for one strategy over another, but also in the way they frame their decisions. The most salient distinction between the groups is that the honest approach in which the listener calls out the gossipers for their inappropriate talk, directly or indirectly, is the most favored approach of the USS participants as shown by the quantitative data, while this is the last choice of most Chinese participants. In fact, for some, it is not even considered a possible choice under any circumstances. Heng (2018) explains that the collectivistic nature of Chinese society highlights that one should avoid bringing attention to oneself, making it difficult for an individual to confront the gossipers directly. It is of interest that the one Chinese interviewee who was prepared to deal directly with the group, framed the issue as what “we have said” even though that speaker is just a listener and is not responsible for the gossip. From the Chinese perspective, the function of this question is to act as a suggestion (Chinese bicultural expert, personal communication, December 3, 2019). The expression of “we” sounds polite, and it may be easier for the gossipers to accept this suggestion since the speaker is taking an inclusive stance.

Several USS privileged the value of honesty and directness in preferring the honest approach and considered this the most ethical choice from their perspectives. In addition, a substantial number of interviewees referred to the importance of loyalty in coming to the defense of their absent friend. An issue uniquely raised by the USS was their responsibility not only to the absent friend but their responsibility to the community of gossipers to call out their inappropriate behavior. One interviewee pointed out that she felt free to choose the honest approach because the US cultural context did not prioritize a threat to face as other cultural contexts might. Furthermore, in rejecting the white lie approach, several USS interviewees commented that even a white lie was still a lie, and this violation of the principle that one should be truthful was not warranted in this situation. The issue of gender was also raised by one USS because she was sensitive to the stereotype that women in particular are prone to gossip.

Interviews with Chinese participants revealed a frequent focus on different priorities. For most of the Chinese students, balancing the feelings of gossipers and the absent friend meant bypassing confrontation with the gossipers while avoiding being party to the gossip if possible. This caused them to prefer changing the topic if possible or presenting a false excuse for leaving the conversation. A common perspective

expressed by the Chinese participants specified the cultural value of considering the feelings of every individual and the need to avert direct conflict in order to save face for all concerned. Several interviewees referred to the desire to avoid being judgmental. While one Chinese participant wanted to avoid being judgmental in order to keep an open mind in a general sense, another explicitly considered the possibility that the gossip might have been justified because the targeted individual might have done something sufficiently serious to warrant the gossip.

The possible influence of power and status in the inter-group relationships was also considered by several Chinese participants while it was never alluded to by USS interviewees. The presence of a higher status person who is considered “*língdǎo* (□ □ , a leader)” would preclude the alternatives of leaving the conversation under any circumstances or indicating discomfort with the topic as either option could be viewed as disrespectful. While it is also the case that USS theoretically might find themselves under greater pressure if a higher status person was involved in the gossip, this possibility was not raised in any of the interviews. Interestingly, Nevo et al. (1994) considered relative social status as a factor in how gossip might be perceived and Watson (2012) noted gender differences in the nature of how friendship and social issues interacted in gossip outcomes.

Another question that arose for the Chinese informants had to do with their lack of sufficient English proficiency to navigate this difficult incident, which was characterized as “very embarrassing,” and in which they feared using “inappropriate expressions” that could result in misunderstandings. In fact, several participants said they might be more forthcoming about their own feelings and reservations with a group of interlocutors who were also Chinese, with whom they could use their dominant language more freely and expressively and whose communication norms were mutually understood.

Despite having identified substantial within-group consensus, it is important to note that interviews revealed minority voices in both communities. The least favored choice for most Chinese informants was still possible for one individual (Yuzhe) who was prepared to risk speaking directly under the condition that he was sufficiently close to the gossipers to believe doing so would not constitute a risk to their friendship. Two USS interviewees preferred changing the topic, eschewing the honest approach. In one case this was to avoid appearing judgmental and in another because this alternative allowed them to avoid leaving the conversation, which implicitly might involve face-threatening behavior. Another USS expressed concern regarding a behavior that might make the gossipers uncomfortable. Finally, one USS did not want her friends to think of her as judgmental, a value more commonly referred to by the Chinese participants.

Conclusion and Implications

An understanding of the sociocultural values and conventions revealed through this research demonstrates the need for active interventions to help members of both groups develop greater personal awareness and understanding of the other group. Pierce and Walz (2002), for example, highlight the need for language teachers to understand not only what norms are appropriate for natives, but also the importance of understanding the “attitudes of learners themselves” (p. 32).

Heng (2018) recommends diversity and intercultural education that encourage individuals to place themselves in the others' position, given an understanding of the constraints and norms under which they are functioning. At the same time, it is important to create opportunities for inter-group interaction and to refocus mindsets from 'us versus them' to 'we' (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). Creating extra-curricular activities of a social nature that will encourage cross-cultural sharing can provide opportunities for students to apply and explore their evolving comprehension of themselves and others.

In an article intended for English teachers of Chinese learners, Pavlik (2012) reviews cultural and pragmatic differences between these two communities. Among the issues she addresses are contrasts in communication norms and values within friendships such as sharing personal information, asking for advice, and an awareness of conversational taboos. The language learning app, Duolingo stresses that learning the pragmatics of language is crucial for effective social communication and incorporates this dimension in its materials (Moline & Blanco, 2020). A review of such pedagogical materials by classes comprised of both Chinese and USS students will be helpful in giving Chinese students the opportunity to explain their sociolinguistic choices to their USS peers and will offer both communities opportunities to share their understandings. Resources for teachers and curriculum developers like those based on the principles offered by Ishihara and Cohen (2010) recommend encouraging such conscious-raising activities and the opportunity for reflection by participants.

It is also crucial to avoid generalizing and to explore individual experiences, considering variables such as length of stay in country, purpose for study, and gender orientation. Our data demonstrate that despite substantial within-group consistency, there were minority voices and a range of perspectives among members of both communities.

While our study included English native speaker reactions to alternatives more typical of Chinese peers, future investigations should clarify to what degree native expectations incorporate flexibility in judging the appropriateness of non-native English usage (Pierce & Walz, 2002; Valdman, 1992).

Research should consider a broad range of challenging situations and how they might be perceived by students of different ages, proficiency levels, gender orientations, and professional aspirations. Longitudinal study of international students as their understanding evolves over time will also be an important element to consider.

We hope that the insights offered here may serve to enlighten and motivate educational and investigative professionals as our shared communities continue to evolve an understanding of how students and other individuals from different sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds respond to challenging situations. Developing intercultural awareness through research and reflection will help to bring about a more satisfying and peaceful resolution to potential conflicts of intercultural pragmatics.

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Changing Worlds, Changing Classrooms: Satellite Children and their Teachers in the Transnational Era

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The challenges for immigrants in the US and Canada include the difficulties of making a living while raising their children. Due to the high cost of living and childcare in cities, along with the realities of low paying jobs and long working hours among many working-class immigrants, growing numbers of families send their infant children to their countries of origin to be raised by relatives for a few years. When the children reach school age, they are returned to their parents in the US. Prior research has focused on immigrant parents' decision-making rationale and their reports of adjustments that children went through. Informed by a critical theoretical framework and culturally sustaining pedagogy, this paper investigates elementary school teachers' understandings of the transnational experiences of their Chinese "satellite children." Interview data from a qualitative study at an East Coast urban school serving a growing Chinese community, where this transnational practice is the norm, reveal challenges and opportunities that the return of these children presents for their parents, their teachers, and for the children themselves. We argue that a culturally sustaining approach is critically needed to better serve this community and student population.

Keywords: satellite babies, transnational children, culturally sustaining pedagogy, teacher education, cultural adjustment, emotional adjustment, bilingual education

The challenges for many new immigrants in the US and Canada include the difficulties of making a living while raising their children. Therefore, growing numbers of immigrant families, especially those living in big cities, send their infant children to their countries of origin to be raised by relatives until the youngsters reach school age. This decision is often made based on several factors, including the intergenerational childcare tradition, the desire to preserve their language and culture with their children, and/or the realities of low pay jobs with long working hours (Kwong et al.,

2009; Lee & Brann, 2015; Wong 2015). The children then return to their parents (in the US or Canada) when they are old enough to attend school.

Social psychologists Bohr and Tse (2009), who coined the term “satellite babies” to refer to children “who shuttle between continents” (p. 267), argue that the traditional Western parenting paradigm with its focus on nuclear families containing mother-child dyads cannot fully explain the immigrant parents’ decision to send young children away, and they stress the need for more research on this issue.

As the number of students with this transnational experience grows in New York City public schools, the children’s experiences have also started to receive media attention. Bernstein’s article in *The New York Times* (2009) reported that these learners experience difficulty with emotional, linguistic, and social adjustment upon returning, and their parents and teachers also have difficulty addressing the children’s unique needs. Research, however, has so far focused mostly on explorations of immigrant parents’ decision-making rationale. We still know very little about how this transnational practice actually impacts the lives of immigrant families as the children start schooling in a new context. Even less data is available regarding how teachers understand the practice, and more importantly, how their understanding might impact their effectiveness in attending to the needs of these students and their families.

This exploratory study investigates how the elementary teachers of these “satellite babies” understand their bicultural, bilingual, and transnational experiences. Through an analysis of the perceptions of a group of teachers who currently work with transnational students, we take a first step in critically examining the challenges and opportunities that the return of these children presents for their parents, their teachers, and for the children themselves. It is our hope that this study will provide the basis for more in-depth research leading to informed discussions about how to better serve students with similar transnational and immigration experiences and how current teacher education programs can better prepare in-service and pre-service teachers to address these issues in their schools.

Background

Transnational Families in Metropolitan Cities

The practice of immigrant parents sending children to their country of origin to be raised by relatives is documented among a variety of cultural groups, including Chinese communities in Toronto and New York City (Bohr & Tse, 2009; Wong, 2015) as well as some Latino and Caribbean communities in which recent immigrants reside (Glasgow & Ghouse-Sheese, 1995; Smith et al., 2004). For the Chinese families, the decision to send their infants to China is often made even before the babies are born and is carefully planned.

To better understand parents’ rationales for sending their small children to their families in China, Bohr and Tse (2009) interviewed Chinese parents living in Toronto who had been considering this option. Though this population largely had middle class status in China, they were struggling to regain their socio-economic level in the Diaspora. Parents cited the expense of raising children in a metropolitan city like Toronto as a major determining factor in considering the alternative option. Immigrant

parents who are still at the beginning stages of developing their careers in a new country did not have the money or the time to fully devote to their young children. Sending their offspring to China to be cared for by someone they trust is viewed as a viable alternative, especially given that intergenerational childcare is a common practice in China. In fact, many of the interviewees in the study mentioned that they were brought up by their grandparents.

Within this socio-economic-cultural context, the practice of sending newborns to relatives back home is considered to work to the best benefit of both the parents and the children. The immigrant parents can have the time and money to establish their legalized status in the host country, and the children can obtain better care and attention from their beloved relatives. In addition, some of the parents in Bohr and Tse's study (2009) noted that cultural and linguistic immersion was an additional benefit for their Canadian-born children, who they felt would not have adequate exposure to acquire Chinese languages and associated cultural backgrounds in Canada.

Wong's study (2015) with working class Chinese immigrant mothers in New York City revealed that, like the middle-class parents in Bohr and Tse's study, the decision to send their newborns back to China was made out of necessity; but to a greater degree, they felt they had no choice. These women came to New York City because based on the tradition of *Fengsu* they are expected to leave their hometowns to earn more money for their families. Many came from Fujian province with limited formal education and limited English proficiency. Coupled with their often-undocumented immigration status, they typically must take low-paying jobs with long working hours. Wong noted that the prevalent practice of sending newborns to China is particularly common in Fujianese Chinese communities in New York City, and it is intricately related to additional financial factors, such as huge migration debts, the expense of living in the city, and lack of affordable childcare. Few could afford housing with sufficient space for themselves and their children.

Both Bohr and Tse's (2009) and Wong's (2015) studies relied on parents' narratives to understand the reasoning behind this parenting choice, but little is known about how this choice impacts the lives of parents, children, and their teachers once the children return for public schools in their countries of birth. As the number of satellite children receiving social services is growing in New York City, the media have begun to look at the adjustment experienced by these children when they return to the US. Newspaper articles in the *New York Times* (Berstein, 2009), *China Daily Asia* (Xiao, 2016), *Voices of New York* (Huang, 2016) and a documentary by Jenny Schwietzer (2016) have brought public attention to this phenomenon. According to these reports, the children have experienced repeated disrupted attachment to their family members (first separation from their biological parents and then another separation from their caregivers in China), which has resulted in developmental problems and mental health issues, difficulty in establishing relationships with their biological parents and teachers, as well as more general difficulty in functioning at school.

In one of the few scholarly investigations of the adjustment of the children upon their return, Liu, Chen, Bohr, Wang, and Tronick (2017) interviewed Chinese parents living in the Boston metropolitan area who had sent their children to China as infants

and brought them back to the US to attend public school. The parents in their study identified the following difficulties faced by their returnee children: being confused about the situation in which they had to experience multiple relocations, missing their primary caregivers in China, adjusting to parents who had a different parenting style than their relatives in China, adjusting to new siblings whom they might not have met before, and adjusting to different food, language, and educational environments. While these interviews and the media reports introduce us to some of the challenges faced by satellite children, they do not provide a holistic picture of this group's experiences. An examination of teachers' views and narratives can add important insight into the issue, as the teachers are adults who spend significant time with the children on a daily basis (in some cases more time than the parents are able to) and are also directly impacted by working with the children who have experienced this transnational cultural practice.

Theoretical Framework

Building upon Ladson-Billings' (1995) work on culturally responsive teaching, Paris and Alim (2014) advocate for a culturally sustaining pedagogy that critically addresses issues of culture, equity, and justice in order to democratize schools. This framework echoes the issues raised in the work of Pennycook (2001) and others in that it emphasizes the importance of recognizing the dynamic aspect of culture and the changing cultural practices that evolve in response to changing social and demographic conditions, such as those that prompted the transnational practice involved in our study.

The conceptualization of childhood has been found to be among the culture-specific and ever-changing constructs that illustrate Pennycook's focus. Boyden (2015) challenges the scope of western notions of childhood, noting that children in other countries and in contexts of poverty are viewed very differently. James and Prout (2015) likewise affirm that concepts of childhood are neither static nor universal. Indeed, Stephens (1995) underscores the crucial nature of how childhood is conceptualized and urges research addressing this and other related variables.

As Bohr and Tse (2009) note, the practice of sending infants to China to be raised by relatives until the children are of school age cannot be understood in the traditional western middle-class view. Exploring the teachers' perceptions of this cultural practice, along with their views regarding the children's needs and resources, is an essential step in developing an understanding of how to create culturally responsive, resource-oriented classroom experiences that will benefit these children and their teachers.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy involves combating the deficit views of cultural differences, which are based on the presumption of the superiority of white, middle-class perspectives (Paris, 2012, 2017). This framework is therefore especially relevant to research that explores and responds to the varying perspectives that educators might hold on the linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of US public schools.

Additionally, the study draws on the funds of knowledge concept (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) also described as "asset-based" teaching (Paris, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017), which highlights the knowledge and resources that families employ in their daily lives, practices which are often unknown and untapped in formal education

settings. González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) maintain that educators must become informed about these potential resources in order to provide responsive, effective instruction.

These theoretical frameworks reject the notion of the superiority of white middle class culture and practices. They emphasize the importance of recognizing and understanding the diverse family and cultural practices that are part of the students' lives in order for these resources to be put to use in creating a classroom pedagogy that can challenge the limitations of an assumed universal perspective, which does not take into account the complex intersectionality of subcultures, socio-economic status, educational background, language varieties, and ethnic identities.

As documented in Wang's (2018) interviews with adults who had been satellite babies, their perceptions were in part influenced by the two competing cultural models of parenting they experienced: the American model and that of their Chinese family members. The intensive model of American parenting, which stresses the presence of the mother, conflicts with the Chinese practices of multiple caregivers and with the possibility of large geographic distances between parents and children. The resulting interpretation among Wang's participants was often that the Chinese practices and those of their families were inferior. As culturally sustaining pedagogy specifically counters the deficit perspectives perpetuated by notions of white middle class superiority, it offers a particularly relevant lens for understanding the transnational experience and practice that our project sets out to examine.

Research Context and Method

The study took place in a K-5 public school program in New York City which has a transitional bilingual program that enrolls about 1,700 students. Nearly 97% of its students are of Chinese heritage. The school is located near one of the local Chinatowns, with Chinese-owned grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants, and afterschool centers. The demographics of the Chinese communities in this Chinatown, and of this school, are predominantly Fujianese from the Fujian province. Thus, it is important to note that many of the children who participate in the bilingual program speak neither English nor Mandarin but rather speak the Fujianese variety of Chinese or Cantonese, neither of which is mutually intelligible with Mandarin (Cai, 2020; Cai & Ebsworth, 2016, 2017). Therefore, the two languages that are used in the bilingual program are not theirs, except to the limited degree that they may have been exposed to Mandarin, the official Chinese language of wider communication. (In the school, translators for parents in all three Chinese languages are available on demand.)

One of the researchers, Dr. Wu, is fluent in Fujianese (also known as Southern Min) as well as Mandarin and spent one day a week at the school observing teaching and learning and offering translation help at parent-teacher conferences over the course of seven months. During this time, several in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with six teachers, all of whom are familiar with the term "satellite babies" and have direct experience working with students who were satellite babies. Interviews probed teachers' experiences working with students who had been sent to China to spend their preschool years, discussing how the teachers' lives are impacted by this unique cultural practice. Thus, taking a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013;

Creswell & Poth, 2018), we seek an understanding of the teachers' perspectives regarding the lived experiences of these children. Informed by a resource perspective to cultural practices among students' communities, we also deliberately asked teachers to reflect on these transnational students and parents' experiences in relation to their own upbringing and educational experiences. An understanding of the teachers' perspectives regarding the lived experiences of these children and parents will assist us in exploring ways that schools and teacher education programs can better serve this population in culturally sustaining rather than assimilative ways. Participants' profile information and interview highlights are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Information by Teacher (Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants)

Julie	Anais	Rebecca	Miriam	Hanna	Ms. Lin
5 years at the school	2 nd year at the school	At least 2 years	5 and ½ years as a sub and 5 years fulltime teaching	ENL Teacher – several years	At least 2 years
Special Ed Class 5 th grade 12:1:1	ICT Class 5 th grade – 27 students: 15 Gen Ed and 12 Special Ed 7 ENL and 4 former ENL	Special Ed Class – 2 3 rd graders and 9 4 th graders 12:1:1	Co-teaches 5 th grade ICT with Anais	Class of 31 4 th grade ENL students or recently exited ENL	1 st grade bilingual
European heritage, born in the US	European heritage, born in the US	Chinese heritage, born in the US	From Trinidad	From Hungary	From China

With two exceptions, all participants were interviewed at least twice. The remaining two participants were interviewed for over an hour each time. (The variability was due to the complex lives of the teachers whose available time for this project was inconsistent.) Interview questions were semi-structured (Seidman, 2013), allowing for broad and open-ended exploration, providing participants opportunities to reflect on their experiences with the Chinese students and communicate their thoughts in detail. More specific questions, emerging from the dialogue and on-going analysis, both during and after each interview, were used to probe and clarify the information provided (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Ely, 1991). In this way, the research was guided by those who have knowledge of the experience (the teachers), and not limited by a set of predetermined questions (see a list of sample participant interview questions in Appendix 1). As noted, the cumulative length of the interviews varied according to each participant's comfort level and time commitments (from one to two hours cumulatively). This study is a result of a total of 12 interviews, which account for more

than five hours and 15 minutes of interviews and informal conversations with the teachers. The total number of interviews and the amount of time spent interviewing each participant also reflected the time required for sufficiency and redundancy of the information.

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Both authors then analyzed the transcriptions through an iterative process of open coding, initial memos, focused coding, and integrative memos (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Both authors went through multiple data analyses and met in person, as well as virtually, to discuss possible codes, categories, and themes. Triangulation of interpretation included the input of a bilingual expert, a professor in the area of graduate language teacher education. The intent was not to make a universal claim at any stage of data analysis, but to understand the various ways that participants in the study talked about and made sense of the transnational practice among their Chinese students and their parents.

Researchers' Positionality

As teacher educators who have taught graduate education courses for in-service teachers in New York City, we, Dr. Wu and Dr. Opstad, have frequently heard teachers express their concern about working with the students who had been sent to the parents' countries of origin in their early years. Dr. Wu was the instructor for two graduate-level courses that some of the participants took as part of their coursework for their certification in TESOL. During class, the topic of satellite babies was introduced, and it triggered much discussion. As someone from a community with strong kinship and intergenerational childcare practice, Dr. Wu found herself in the delicate position, during these discussions, of defending the transnational Chinese families, who had made the decisions to send their young children away. The classroom discussions eventually led us to undertake the research of satellite students, with a focus on delving into teacher perception/understanding of satellite students through teacher interviews at this K-5 school.

To reduce the potential influence of the professor-student relationship on interview responses, most interviews were conducted by Dr. Opstad, who was not directly teaching any of the participants. Given Dr. Opstad's European heritage and Caucasian features, the teachers were more likely to perceive her as someone outside of the Chinese community, not familiar with this cultural phenomenon. Therefore, the teachers took on the role of an expert informing the interviewer about their experiences. Dr. Wu's Taiwanese heritage and cultural background proved an essential asset in interpreting the interview data, providing insight into Chinese culture that was crucial to a thorough and accurate analysis.

Findings

Analysis of the interviews with the teacher participants revealed challenges encountered by each group (i.e., children, parents, and teachers), potential misunderstandings, differences, commonalities, and strengths connected to the transnational practice experienced by their students. We present and discuss challenges identified by the teachers, suggesting cultural and contextual issues that may be involved. The perceived commonalities and differences between the teachers'

childhoods and cultural backgrounds and those of the students are explored in order to gain a better understanding of the teachers' perspectives. We provide a glimpse of the challenges faced by the parents, as perceived by the teachers, and explore the ways that cultural expectations influence how parents and teachers view their roles. Finally, we present the strengths the teachers have observed among the satellite children in their classrooms.

Understanding Satellite Children's Lives through the Words of Their Teachers

Earlier studies and media coverage have highlighted the social-emotional and cultural-linguistic adjustments that the students need to go through when they return to NYC. Our interviews with the teachers revealed that the adjustments the children experience are more complex than depicted in the earlier literature.

First of all, many children are not fully reunited with their parents when they return to NYC. Not only is it common for parents to work long hours, but it is also typical for one or both of their parents to work outside of New York State. Thus, the children do not necessarily have regular contact with their parents. Many are taken care of by relatives, such as aunts, uncles, or grandparents, who may travel back and forth between the US and China. Other children might stay at a night care center, facilities that are part of an underground sub-culture known to this community but perhaps not recognized by the authorities. It is well-known and well-appreciated in the school community that a night care center takes care of children whose parents work in states such as Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Utah, Arizona, Texas, or Florida. Students who stay at the night care center typically see their parents once a week at most. Below, the ENL teacher, Hanna, explained this unique transnational experience of the satellite students the school serves:

It's not the parents usually who raise them...there is no constant reminder of how to do things and what to do... There's a lot of people involved in their- you know, how they are raised. It's not consistent; it's not just a grandma or a mother and a father; there are multiple people involved. So you might say something to mom, the next day the father might show up and not know anything about what kind of conversation you had with the mom. So that's something we've been experiencing.

Julie, one of the fifth-grade teachers, discussed how lack of adult interaction at home impacts students' social skills:

... Even daily conversations like: Good morning, how are you? They don't really even talk to each other like that in Chinese. You find also that they don't talk to their parents at home. They don't see their parents... most of them, they wake up and get ready for school themselves. They're at the after-school program until 6:00, their parents come home from work around 10:00. So, there's very limited interaction with parents.

Rebecca, the fourth-grade teacher, commented that the children needed guidance in daily routines, such as not wearing the same clothing every day, something she attributed to the parents having to work so much and not being there to be sure the children learned those conventions.

Anais, a fifth-grade teacher, also emphasized that a focus on social/emotional type of education is something that needs to be addressed with the children because of the realities of their family situation:

...even more so than other demographics, because at home they're not getting that instruction for whatever reasons. And it's not because they're Chinese. It's because they are not having the interaction and the guidance from their families for whatever reasons - the long hours and working out of state and being separated from them.

As Hanna noted, many of the students go home at the end of the day without adults to ask them questions like, "What was going on? What did you learn? What are you doing? How can I help you? What do you need?" As noted by Liu et al. (2017), limitations on time to spend with the children, initially a factor in the decision to send children to China, also becomes a factor in the children's adjustment process upon returning to the US.

Hanna shared with us a moment when one of her students was not able to express herself using the right words due to perceived limits on her vocabulary:

Like one of the girls - I was wearing the colonial outfit and it was like fluffy and big and then this girl looks at me and she goes, "Oh you look so fat in that." From her tone and expression, Hanna concluded, "She didn't mean to say fat."

Hanna believed the student had only one word to express herself, which is inappropriate from the western cultural perspective, but she had no choice because that was the language she had available to her.

Hanna also noted her satellite students did not know how to handle a situation when they couldn't eat what was served in the cafeteria:

They bring up their lunch and you see what they're eating and you're like, "Oh, you're only eating certain things, you're not eating anything with cheese or milk" because they have lactose intolerance.... Every day they leave the cheese sandwich there and they will never touch. "Oh, well why won't you eat that?" "We can't eat cheese" 'Okay, why don't you eat the vegetables, why don't you ask for something else?' And this is the conversation. Like in the lunchroom you don't have to accept that one thing they give you, you could take a different option.

However, we argue that the skills that the teachers refer to not only require linguistic knowledge but also cultural knowledge. Dr. Wu grew up in a cultural background similar to the students and it is common for someone to offer what Americans would view as offensive comments on someone else's body shape (e.g., big, fat), and asking for something else on the table as a child is a rare practice and is often discouraged in many Chinese families. In fact, attitudes toward body shape vary across cultures, and in Chinese culture, women's bodies are often subject to public commentary. James (2018) reflected on her own experience growing up as a bi-racial, bigger-sized girl in Singapore, noting that her Chinese relatives often called her out on her weight and size at family reunions. Such acts were often understood as caring to the children, who were believed to lack attention to their body and health. However, during

her stay in China, she realized that bodies, especially women's bodies, are essentially public space, where everyone, including strangers have something to say about it. In making sense of her experience, James includes comments from psychologists such as Dr. Lisa Kiang, whose work focuses on identity and culture, suggesting that the value of collectivism or relatedness appears to give some people the permission to comment on others' lives, including age, salaries, body shape, marital status, etc., (see <https://psychology.wfu.edu/about-the-department/faculty-and-staff/lisa-kiang/>).

In terms of table etiquette, Chinese children oftentimes are expected to take whatever they are offered and not to ask for something else, unless they had eaten all of what they had been given. As a result, while what the teachers described might be related to lack of parent-child interaction at home, it might also be related to different cultural practice or parenting style. Table manners are heavily loaded with cultural meanings and mediated by material artifacts. Linguistic anthropologists have shown that children oftentimes are socialized into communicative expectations, symbolic, moral, and emotional meanings associated with food and eating at mealtimes (Ochs & Shohet, 2006). In either case, it suggests an additional adjustment that the satellite children need to make when attending schools in the US with very different social interactional norms. Following culturally sustaining research, this also suggests the importance of recognizing the dynamic aspect of culture when working with students from diverse backgrounds.

The concept of personal space is another aspect of cultural knowledge that some teachers identified as important to be taught to the satellite children. Teachers suspected that after living in a populated country during their early formative years, many students did not mind being close to one another or are used to a lot of people in a small place. Hanna talked about the need for her to ask for some personal space when her students get too close, "like touch, touch, touch" kind of close to her. She needed to teach her students the use of "excuse me" because the notion of personal space in China is very different from space conventions here in the US. She also noted that she experienced this type of adjustment herself as a new immigrant in the US. Her way was different from the US customs and also different from what the children were used to in China. She drew upon her own immigrant experience to help the children understand that these are things that vary from one culture to another. The middle-class cultural norms underpinning many US schools can be a source of confusion for children brought up in a different culture and social class. These teachers' narratives suggest that both class and culture mediate their satellite students' educational experiences in the US.

In addition to the socio-cultural-linguistic adjustments that students need to make, there are other important adjustments that they face upon returning to their families in New York City. Negotiating new relationships with their siblings and parents was often cited in the teachers' interviews as a challenge for the students. They might be meeting their siblings for the first time and have to share a room with them in a small apartment. Those who were sent away might have negative feelings toward siblings who were able to stay in the US. Reestablishing relationships with the parents is never easy for the satellite children. Earlier research has revealed that children often had difficulty adjusting to different discipline styles (Liu et al., 2017). Our teacher interview data revealed a more complex picture of the parent-child relationship. In

some cases, parents were not literate or had little formal education, and they had sacrificed so much that the economic aspect of the relationship is highlighted. The excerpt below describes the unique parent-child relationship among these Chinese immigrant families:

I've had kids say, "My mom says, when I turn such and such age, I owe her this much money, because she had to spend that on me." There's some transactional type things that are discussed with kids. I get the sense that there's pressure too, because a lot is at stake...whether they succeed or not in terms of their family stability. Or one boy said, "I can't do the Secret Santa. We are saving the money for a house" or "I got money for Chinese New Year, but it's for the house."

Along those same lines, several of the teachers commented on the pressure the children appeared to feel regarding grades. Some children would cry when the report cards came out, worried about their parents' reactions. Both parents and children know that test scores and grades will determine their admission to junior high. Orellana, Thorne, Chee, and Lam (2001) found a similar aspect to the relationships between the Korean "parachute kids" they studied and their parents, despite coming from a more affluent demographic than the Chinese satellite babies. These parachute kids are sent ahead of their families to the US, at great financial expense, with the hope that they will do well in school and qualify for admittance to a prestigious university, and ultimately obtain a professional degree. There was considerable pressure to achieve academically because of the investment and sacrifice the parents had made.

While many satellite children, as described by their teachers, had happy memories of their lives in China, memories that included caring grandparents, pets, living in a house with a yard, and playing with cousins, their new lives in NYC tend to be filled with financial insecurity, as evidenced by the fact that many of the parents need to work for long hours or work outside of New York State, all of which has a direct impact on their relationship with their parents and their emotional and academic development.

Teachers and Students: Searching for Common Ground

Our purpose in asking the teachers about their own childhoods was to provide context for the perspectives they shared regarding their satellite students' lives. Although the teachers came from a variety of cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, with three growing up in the US and three growing up outside the US (see Table 1), they were quite similar in their descriptions of how their childhoods compared to the experiences of the children. "Very different!" was the almost unanimous response. The teachers' childhoods were typified by lots of time with parents and family dinners. Their parents also spoke the language of the school and were directly involved in their education. The satellite children's parents work long hours, are unfamiliar with the ways of US schools, and often are not comfortable with English. All of these factors contribute to a lack of confidence and lack of opportunity to participate in school life as the teachers' parents had.

Initially, responses to questions regarding similarities and differences between their cultural backgrounds and that of the students focused on superficial aspects of culture, such as holidays. Julie expressed bewilderment that the children did not seem to understand St. Patrick's Day and noted that they did not seem to celebrate any

holidays, which in her view included a sit-down dinner with family. Another fifth-grade teacher, Miriam, was quite upset that one of the children would not be celebrating Thanksgiving at home, so she arranged a special Thanksgiving dinner in class for his benefit. As well-meaning as her actions were, they also reveal the assumption that the celebrations that were meaningful to her would hold the same importance for the children. However, Anais expressed her frustration with the superficial treatment of culture in the school:

I think it's really western-European centric. But I think that's across the board in the US. I think there are a lot more opportunities...like even though we're a bilingual Chinese school, I don't find that the kids get a chance to learn about their culture. I think they do in ways that are pretty superficial... Like Chinese New Year show, let's all dance! And we honor the culture because we do that.

When specifically prompted to consider similarities in values, teachers were able to identify some commonalities. Miriam mentioned her rural upbringing and recalled being able to connect with experiences the children had had prior to coming to the US. She also noted a similarity regarding childcare - in her culture, there was a resistance to going outside the family as well. Relatives, not daycares, provided childcare for parents who had to work. Anais commented on the similarity in the value of education, hard work and the importance of respect. As she put it, "You don't find that entitled attitude; I didn't have it and they don't have it." Hanna noted that she could identify with the adjustment the children experienced in coming to a new country. Although she was an adult when she came to the US, she could relate to the language and culture adjustment that students go through, and how confusing that can be. She recalled the differences in personal space and conversational style, for example, and found that these experiences helped her to understand what her students were experiencing.

On the other hand, Julie could not identify any similarities and immediately mentioned the fact that the parents did not speak English. She commented that the parents left the education of the children to the teachers, which was very different from her parents' views. She elaborated on her perceived educational differences, commenting that, "In China, they don't really have read-alouds and discuss books. It's very foreign to them." She further expressed her belief that the adults were free to abuse the children in China.

Rebecca also emphasized the difference between her mother's direct involvement in her education and the very different level of participation that she saw with her students' parents, although she attributed this difference to the changing economic times. When Rebecca was a child, her mother was able to be a stay-at-home mom, an option that is not financially possible for the children's immigrant parents. Both Julie and Rebecca seemed to hold an unquestioned assumption/expectation that it was a parent's responsibility to help their children with homework, a view that is common in middle class environments in the US, but one that is by no means universal across cultures.

Similarly, teachers' perceptions of the parents' attitudes regarding their children's education varied considerably. Julie expressed the view that she had to "stay on top of the parents" and commented:

They feel like it's the teacher's job to do the bulk of the work with the kids, because they feel that, "Well, I don't speak English, so I can't help my child at home." If I went home with a bad report grade, they [my parents] felt it reflected on them, whereas these parents just feel like it's all the teacher's responsibility... I have kids who don't do homework and the parents will tell me, "He said he did it." But they're not actually checking.

On the other hand, Hanna described the parents as cooperative and willing to try to help at home. Anais and Miriam noted the emphasis the parents placed on school and the pressure they put on their children to get good grades. While the parents likely were not there to oversee homework, they communicated the value of education and hard work to their children. Anais interpreted the parent involvement this way:

Because of the language difference and the work schedules, it makes it hard for some of the parents to stay on top of what the kids are doing. They seem to know what's happening with math...but they rely on us and trust the education of the students to us.

What these teachers described about the Chinese parents is very similar to Li's (2002) study on home literacy among Chinese immigrant families in Canada. Li found out that the Chinese families in her study were distanced from their children's school lives, had little knowledge about how schools in Canada worked, and did not question or challenge teachers' authority due to their background in a Confucian society. While other aspects of Chinese home practices can be understood as beneficial in helping the students succeed at school (e.g., high expectations, parental sacrifice for their children's education), Li noted that parents' expectations, strategies, and investment in their children's education are also influenced by their social class, their educational backgrounds, and their level of English proficiency (2002, 2006).

Specifically, regarding the parents' decision to send their children to China to be raised by relatives, the teachers expressed varying levels of understanding:

Anais: Oh, I get the choice. I can't imagine trying to afford childcare with my middle-class salary, so I get it. And they might be better off than what they face here.

Miriam: So I understand them a little bit. Taking the child back to China and having the child live without a parent? That I don't understand. And it's okay for them. From what we've done at school, learning that it's okay. You hear people talking about how it's their culture. And it's okay.

Ms. Lin: Many parents, they need to make a living and... they don't have enough education on how to take care of babies – they are not educators and don't know the importance of forming the connection with the parents.

Rebecca: For me, it's hard to understand. Because I didn't grow up that way. I had my parents here.

Julie: I could not imagine seeing my child at 5 years old - that would be a really hard bond to form.... I don't know, I just feel like somehow there are other ways. Like you could get a nanny or... like I have kids in this class, they have siblings still in China. So, I feel that if you can make it work for one kid, then you can try and...you know that affects the child too – he's not going to see his sibling until

she's five. There are abandonment issues there too, I feel like. So, I can't relate to that, no.

These teachers' varying understandings of the Chinese transnational practice point out that this contested practice deserves more open discussions among teachers, particularly regarding their cultural biases and positioning. After all, how the teachers understand these differences might affect their ability to make culturally sustaining decisions when working with the Chinese parents and students. As Howard (1999, p. 106) keenly puts it, teachers need to adopt the stance that "their own personal appropriation of truth is merely one of many possibilities, not the only one."

While several teachers identified a need to address social skills and cultural conventions in US schools for their satellite students, they felt the Common Core did not allow time or space for them to do so. Below Anais spoke of the constraints she felt in teaching this student population social skills:

It's probably something K-2nd would focus more on, and of course you would do it throughout schooling, but because of Common Core and other demands, it's been very hard to address those social issues with the students in the younger grades, and as a result it just goes up and up. Sometimes I find that I don't take the time to correct certain things and discuss things. It's hard to juggle everything.

At a time when students need to take high-stake state tests starting in third grade, the academic demands for K-2nd graders are higher than decades ago. Under these educational circumstances, satellite children's social needs are not addressed in the lower grades, which seems to influence their social-emotional skills when they reach upper grades.

Speaking of the increased academic demands that place constraints on the flexibility the teachers have to focus on the whole child, Hanna commented on the value of informal times:

A lot of times the weirdest things, the most unexpected things come out of a lunch monitor thing [when teachers act as lunch monitors] where they come and help you and they are talking about their everyday life that you don't really get a chance to address during instructional time.

It seems that with such constraints, it's difficult for teachers of the transnational students to address their students' unique needs. Since the satellite students' lived experiences are very different from their teachers', some teachers in our study were not able to understand their students' experiences in the broader context of economic struggles among immigrant families. They may appreciate the economic difficulty but be limited by preconceived and culturally influenced notions of what is acceptable. We argue that a better understanding of the Chinese immigrant families' cultural practices and lived experiences will prepare teachers for the "unexpected things" and allow them to better serve this population. In addition, the unstructured encounters with satellite students are especially important as these encounters allow teachers to establish personal relationships with students and explore their varied ways of being.

The importance of these unstructured encounters and relationships is illustrated in another example below, provided by Hanna:

There is one girl in this class for example whose mom is not here. She comes in every morning, and she needs a one-minute hug. That's how the day starts. She's just hugging and hugging. I say, "How many hugs?" And she goes, "I need 2,000 hugs a day."

Another student she taught the year before comes every day just to check in with her. It doesn't have to be a long conversation – it might be just a question and a response – but there is a need to make that connection. As the consistent adult presence in the children's lives, the teachers are in a unique position to fill this need. Although the concern often expressed in the literature is that transnational children will be at risk for difficulties in forming attachments, the teachers in this study did not find that to be true of their students. Instead of resisting human connection, they seemed to pursue it.

We would like to end this section with a quote from Hanna, who has provided us with many important insights to the lives of satellite students and parents:

Every single student is different. Some students seek attention by being a little bit annoying. Because they know that if they do that, we'll address it, "Please don't do that, come talk to me." And that's what they want because they don't get that attention at home.

While we focus on the common elements in the satellite children's lives, we want to highlight that every student is different and responds to the transnational experience differently. The commonality they all share is the need to connect and be understood. It is thus especially important for the teachers to go beyond what they already know, or think they know, about their satellite children to build the personal relationships that will benefit both the children and the teachers.

Understanding Parents' Lives through the Eyes of the Teachers

Interviews with the teachers documented the difficulties of separation from family members, reuniting with family members, and adjusting to the living conditions of their urban environment. The parents endure all those challenges while trying to earn a living and navigate a new language and culture. They further encounter the often-puzzling responsibility of raising a bicultural child.

The parents have made enormous sacrifices to try to provide a better life for their families. However, as Hanna observed, "The parents work really, really hard and they work long hours to make sure they have everything for the children, but that also takes away from the time they could spend with them." According to the teacher interviews, parents tend to compensate for their absence from their children's day to day lives with material things (the latest technology, visits to nail salons, even cash).

The parents are often conflicted about how to discipline their children and will ask the teachers for advice. Parents will say, "They'll listen to you." The children are accustomed to the discipline style of the grandparents or other relatives who were caring for the children in China. The change in the caretaker and authority figure, coupled with the need to renew the parent-child relationship, contributes to the

discipline difficulties for the parents. Children can interpret any correction as lack of love, and parents can be reluctant to set or enforce limits. Anais commented:

You get the sense that the kids do not - sometimes do not respect the authority of the parents... I think it's being overwhelmed: care of other siblings and other demands in their life. Just like I get overwhelmed and don't address certain social issues that arise in the class. I think it's the same thing for them. And in some cases, it's- they have a child who is an American. And it's dealing with: Their child is bicultural or multicultural. And it's that sense of being brought up in this culture, is different too, and they may not understand that. I think that's part of it.

Below Rebecca's advice illustrated her presumption of a common cultural upbringing and parental practice. She appeared to assume that what her mother taught her would be the same as what her students' parents would say to their children, and that the parents had experienced this as well in their own childhoods:

Just think about what your parents taught you. Just do the exact same thing. That's what I'm doing with your child. Whatever my mom taught me, whatever my teachers taught me, I'm doing it too. I'm showing the same thing to your child. Just think about what your parents taught you. Just do the exact same thing.

The problem is further complicated when the children have experienced home language loss. Parents do not realize how quickly that can happen, and at parent-teacher conferences, the teachers find out that the parents are having serious communication difficulties with their children. Anais recounted:

We have instances at P/T conferences, where we find out that the parents can't communicate with the children. Even though it's a bilingual school, that the kids have lost enough of the Chinese that they can't communicate. Yes. And we've had kids with serious discipline issues at home because they're not able to [communicate].

While it is a bilingual school, it is a transitional bilingual program, with the emphasis on English. Further, for some of the students, the variety of Chinese used in the program is not the variety they know. And with parents working such long hours, the children do not receive sufficient exposure to avoid home language loss.

Conflicting expectations regarding the roles of teachers, parents, and the school itself in educating the children, contributed to the parents' challenges. In some of the interviews, there appeared to be an assumption that it was the parents' responsibility to learn to navigate the school system, rather than the school's responsibility to be responsive to the needs of the students and families. Both Julie and Rebecca expressed this view, suggesting that the parents take time from their jobs to do this. Rebecca was sympathetic regarding the financial difficulties the parents had, but she seemed to assume that this was their responsibility as parents, and that they had the option to take time off from work:

...our school holds PTA meetings where they invite the parents to come in, but these parents just don't, because they are always working. And they don't find

out about the information about testing and about what they need to do to get into a good junior high school... But if parents did make time and they took time off from work - like I know that it's hard to take one day off, because then you lose a day's work, but honestly, I think it's worth it in the end. If the parents knew what the school system was.

Clearly, discipline is an issue for many families due to inconsistent childcare in the families. Parents' lack of knowledge of the US school system and limited English proficiency (in some cases, Chinese literacy) also pose substantial challenges for them in working with the school to advance their children's educational experiences. These narratives seem to suggest that socioeconomic status along with culture, parents' English proficiency or their familiarity with mainstream schooling all come to shape the Chinese parents' involvement at school.

Children's Strengths

Despite the challenges documented in prior research and media reports, the teachers in our study were able to identify strengths among these children who have been back and forth between two countries: They are good at technology; they have some bilingual ability that the school can potentially build upon; they show a desire to learn and willingness to work hard; and they have developed resilience. For instance, Anais talked about how her Chinese students seemed to be able to handle disappointment better than the students of other backgrounds, suggesting that students' resilience might be a result of their transnational experiences. She explained:

Maybe it's their relationship with disappointment to some extent, like it doesn't disappoint them as much as it would for other children. They can let it roll, like, 'oh the party is not happening this week,' and they would be like, 'all right'".

Other teachers also commented that many of their Chinese students treat one another as family members and help each other learn in class. While some students have experienced language loss, others continue to socialize in Chinese during lunchtime or offer Chinese-English translation help to students who struggle to understand the teachers' instruction. The majority of the teachers' narratives focused on the challenges that their students face, and some teachers needed specific probing to provide accounts of their students' strengths. We argue that these accounts offer us important information about how teachers might be encouraged to identify and build upon students' strengths in their teaching, which we will discuss in more detail in the next section.

Conclusions and Implications

Considering the unique experiences of the transnational students described here, we contend that a culturally sustaining pedagogy is critical to address their needs and build upon their strengths. Getting to know one's students is especially crucial to avoid some of the misconceptions that occur when the experiences of the teachers and students differ so markedly. Li's (2002) study of home literacy among immigrant Chinese families highlighted that the Canadian teachers and the Chinese parents' different understandings of literacy and its instruction has become a battle and a risk factor in the Chinese children's academic learning. In our study, teachers' comments

also revealed some cultural and social class biases and assumptions that might negatively impact their relationships with the students and families.

Furthermore, it is well established that the best academic outcomes for emergent bilingual learners are supported by a bilingual approach, in which the language the children know is used to access content and develop literacy (Cummins, 1992, 2001; Ebsworth, 2002; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Thomas and Collier, 2002, 2012). The minority language is included and recognized as a valuable resource, rather than as a problem to overcome. Elevating the status of the children's language in this way provides essential socio-emotional support, with more positive emotional outcomes for learners (Cummins, 2001, 2005; Toppelberg & Collins, 2010).

Unfortunately, the "bilingual program" in which the satellite babies were enrolled often did not meet their socio-linguistic needs. The Chinese language offered by the school was mutually unintelligible with the one they spoke, and the teachers did not always have access to knowledge about the particular cultures represented by the students.

Importantly, our study supports the importance of continued development of the appropriate Chinese language for these transnational students, both for the academic benefits and for the social/emotional support it can provide. As Buchholtz, Casillas, and Lee (2017, p. 44) argue, "...language is a crucial form of sustenance in its own right, providing the basis for young people's complex identities, as well as their social agency." Part of the reason for the parents' decision to send their children to China related to the development of language and culture. When the children experience loss of the home language after returning to the US, the communication between children and parents suffers, the sacrifice the family endured is no longer balanced by the benefit of acquiring the home language and culture, and the benefits of bilingualism are lost as well.

Since parents have limited time at home with their children, they are dependent on the schools to support the development of both languages. Cummins and Early (2011) describe the powerful impact of programs that involve students in the creation of identity texts, which make use of the children's language, culture, and experiences to develop literacy and confront the social realities of their lives. Incorporating technology into these projects would both channel the children's fascination with technology in a constructive way and address the logistical obstacles of parents working long hours and family members separated by distance. Technology then becomes a tool for social interaction and connection, rather than an impediment to it. Further, when parents' experiences and knowledge are incorporated into these identity text projects, through interviews, shared stories and experiences via technology (face-time, skype, video, audio, etc.), the school demonstrates that the families' cultures and knowledge are valued in the school. In order to provide an environment that is culturally sustaining, teachers and students need opportunities to explore cultural assumptions and the variety of ways that problems are addressed. Such explorations could allow them to recognize that there might be shared values underlying very different cultural practices.

Teacher preparation programs are crucial in bringing this about. The Professional Standards for Bilingual Educators (Nevárez La Torre, 2015, 2019) recently adopted by NYSABE stress the importance of teachers' knowledge regarding language varieties and associated subcultures. Cai (2020) demonstrates that thorough and enlightened language teacher education can result in greater understanding among language teachers, in particular those dealing with the umbrella of Chinese languages and varieties.

In a broader sense, courses and professional development activities can include projects in their coursework that enable pre-service or in-service teachers to investigate the ways immigrants have addressed the challenges of living in a new country, the reasons for economic inequality and ways to address it or identify and explain cultural misunderstandings that take place in the environments in which they live. Understanding the dynamic and adaptive aspect of culture would also be important in order to avoid simplistic interpretations that hamper the potential of culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). Teachers could then engage the children in their classrooms with similar projects.

Documenting the stories of the teachers and students in the school offers another vehicle to understand and connect with one another, showing that each member of the school community has value. The "Herstory" project (<http://herstorywriters.org>)¹ is an example of how immigrants can share their stories and experiences to enlighten others as they develop their own literate skills. The school can then become a community of learners where teachers and students are valued and encouraged to collaborate together to reach their potential.

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End Note

¹The “Herstory Writers Workshop” started in March 1966. Its approach to mentorship is to make caring central, “allowing those with little formal education to work with complex notions of narrative structure...To bring unheard voices, both near and far, into the public arena; to transform lived experiences into written memoirs, powerful enough to change hearts, minds, and policy.” <https://www.herstorywriters.org/our-mission-philosophy>

Appendix

Teacher Interview Questions

Consistent with recommended practice in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Ely, 1991), interviews began with open-ended questions so that the responses would most accurately represent the participants' perceptions and experiences, and not limited by the interviewer's assumptions. Subsequent questions emerged from the dialogue and ongoing data analysis, allowing us to clarify our understandings of the information provided. At some point, all participants were asked about the strengths and challenges the satellite children faced, how their experiences and culture compared to the children's, how they understood the parents' decision to send the children to China as infants and then bring them back to the US for school. Questions included:

- Tell me about your class.
- Do you have lot of children who have the experience of being satellite babies – sent back to China as infants and returned to the US to start school? Is it readily apparent which children have experienced this?
- Do they talk much about their life in China? What kinds of things do they say?
- How well do you know their parents?
- What are some of the challenges the satellite children have?
- What are some of the strengths the satellite children have?
- Do you find there are adjustments you make for the satellite children?
- How does this teaching situation compare to your previous experiences?
- What were your experiences like growing up and/or as a parent yourself?
- Do you find cultural similarities between you and the children?
- How would you compare their values and your values?
- Can you identify with the parents' decision to send their children to China and then bring them back to the US for school?
- What recommendations do you have for teachers of satellite children?

“It Kind of Shows the Terrible Morality of This Scene”: Using Graphic Novels to Encourage Feminist Readings of Jewish Hebrew Texts with Religious Significance

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This study considers whether and in what ways graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish Hebrew texts can encourage adolescent Modern Orthodox girls to adopt autonomous critical responses when encountering narratives that present women in unequal roles vis a vis men. According to scholars, Jewish literacy should teach students to read traditional Hebrew texts reverently while forming autonomous interpretations and opinions. Instead, Jewish educators teach normative readings posed by approved rabbinic authorities. This is particularly the case when teaching issues relating to gender among Modern Orthodox Jews, a conservative Jewish denomination, strives to synthesize tradition with the values of modern, secular society. I therefore explore through think-alouds and semi-structured interviews to explore graphic novel adaptations of Jewish texts' potential to give adolescents opportunities to voice autonomous, critical interpretations. Findings show that adolescents, through graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish texts are able to engage in critical readings of the source material. Participants admitted that while they inherently imagined scenes to unfold in a certain way, they never spent time deeply considering the assumptions such imagined details led them to make. Thus, reading graphic novel adaptations did not lead participants to uniformly challenge their understood rabbinic metanarratives, but instead generally made them question their own personal imaged narratives.

Keywords: graphic novels, Jewish education, feminism, critical literacy

Literacy practices among American Jews represent a unique microcosm of reading communities, where scholars have noted a tension between literacy education's proposed goals and observed teaching and reading practices. In theory, Jewish literacy should be an ongoing interaction between reader and traditional Jewish texts, where the reader respects what the text offers while he or she also struggles to determine his

or her own personal understanding of it (Holtz, 1999; Rosenak, 2003). However, researchers observing the practice of teaching Jewish literacy generally do not see educators teaching a dynamic engagement with the text—only respect for the texts and their authority (Hassenfeld, 2017; Lehmann, 2008).

Tensions between encouraging individuals’ autonomy when understanding Jewish religious texts and enforcing rabbinic authorities and their readings is particularly visible when considering teaching gender-related issues related to Modern Orthodox Jews. Modern Orthodox Judaism, a conservative Jewish denomination striving to synthesize rabbinic tradition with the values of modern, secular society (Krakowski, 2017), has been struggling to contend with feminist values for several decades (Trencher, 2017). Students are instead initiated into discourses raised by the rabbinic patriarchy, reinforcing gender roles, making inequalities appear less problematic, and suppressing pro-women readings.

I investigate whether and in what ways graphic novel adaptations of traditional Hebrew, Jewish texts can encourage adolescent Modern Orthodox Jewish girls to adopt critical responses when encountering narratives that present women in unequal roles vis a vis men. It is specifically a case study of three Modern Orthodox girls ages 14-15, comparing how they read and make sense of excerpts from graphic novel adaptations of Jewish holy texts based on their personal and religious backgrounds. Particularly through think-alouds and short semi-structured interviews, I look at the different ways the medium of the graphic novel helped readers consider narratives and texts they are very familiar with in new and novel ways.

This article begins with a review of scholarship of Jewish literacies and the role graphic novels can play. I then describe my research methodology and present findings. The discussion considers the impact and ways that graphic novels do and do not encourage participants’ critical readings, and I conclude by considering the implications for teaching and future research.

Literature Review

This literature review opens by sketching the population being studied—Modern Orthodox Jews—followed by an exploration of different literacies in Judaism, noting the tension between the theory and the practice. I then describe how the topic of the study—feminism—has become a point of contention in Modern Orthodox Jewry. Also, I describe the dual pull of modernity and tradition and explain how that affects Jews’ ability to navigate gender issues. Finally, I examine the literacy medium used in this study, graphic novels and, specifically, their adaptations of classic Jewish texts.

Modern Orthodox Jews

Modern Orthodox Judaism is considered among social scientists to constitute a more religiously liberal branch of an otherwise religiously conservative denomination of Judaism (Cashman, 2015; Lehmann, 2008; Lipsky, 2016). Philosophically, Modern Orthodoxy encourages individuals to live a traditional Jewish life that strictly adhere to rabbinic and Biblical laws while actively engaging with the general secular society (Krakowski, 2017; Waxman, 2019). This means that Modern Orthodox Jews pray several times a day, believe that the Bible was written by God, and that rabbinic law

also is of divine origin, yet they do not hesitate to interact with non-Jews in the professional (if not social) sphere, and they generally believe in evolution and the scientifically derived age of the universe (Trencher, 2017). Recent research has uncovered that the dichotomy of Jewish life and civic life leads to Modern Orthodox Jews navigating—at times with difficulty—between a desire for autonomy as well as readily submitting to the authority of normative traditional Jewish religious values (Bieler, 1986; Lehmann, 2008).

Brill (2004) suggests that the bifurcation of faith and (U.S.) culture is in fact a Protestant division (namely, a division that places faith in conflict with culture instead of embedded within culture). In fact, the encounter between U.S. culture and Jewish faith have led to several outcomes. First, the vast majority of Modern Orthodox Jews approach tradition as practitioners rather than intellectuals (Bechhofer, 2011; Waxman, 2019), and they separate their religious and modern lives in one of three ways: (a) they are particularistic and seem to reject modern culture; (b) they separate their Jewish lives from their secular lives; and (c) they approach secular culture as a handmaiden to Judaism, selecting certain elements of it to enrich their Jewish practices (Brill, 2004). Second, there is a smaller, intellectual, and arguably elitist group that tries to minimize compartmentalization between modernity and Judaism, exploring through study and practice how the two can better fit together (Bechhofer, 2011).

Interestingly, unlike other Jewish religious denominations, Modern Orthodoxy has no central authority and is, as a result, less coherent (Bechhofer, 2011; Waxman, 2019). There is no rabbinic body that defines Modern Orthodox Jews' religious practices, but instead Modern Orthodox Jews rely on rulings from individual rabbis—who may or may not have conflicting opinions with his peers and colleagues. Note that although there is no central governing body of Modern Orthodox rabbis, the authority of the rabbinate as a ruling and administering class in Modern Orthodox Judaism remains indisputable. Waxman (2019), for example, notes that while there is often variations between how different Modern Orthodox Jews practice their religion, these decisions are generally framed as matters of choice instead of framing older traditions as faulty. Waxman reflects that, considering this, Modern Orthodoxy is fairly open except for "what it considers to be deviance through the rejection of its rabbis" (p. 100). As will be explained when discussing Jewish literacy below, the importance of rabbinic authority leads to reading practices that are unique to American Jews, standing in opposition to both reading practices taught in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms as well as widely held philosophical goals of Jewish literacy education.

Jewish Literacy and Education

Jewish literacy has been defined both objectively as well as subjectively. The objective approach defines Jewish literacy as familiarity with and ability to engage with a corpus of Jewish texts and ideas (Hassenfeld, 2017; Telushkin, 1991). These texts broadly cover Jewish theology, ethics, culture, and history (from ancient to modern). Within this framework, researchers identified skills required to be literate in Jewish texts, including (a) asking critical questions about Jewish texts (Sigel et al., 2007), (b) seeing everyday events through a specifically Jewish lens (Jacobs, 2013) and

(c) comfortably reading and communicating in Biblical and Modern Hebrew (Avni, 2012).

With the dissemination of New Literacy Studies and scholars noting that there are different socially embedded practices when reading, suggesting that literacy is not as straightforward as teaching an objective set of skills to students (Brandt & Clinton, 2016; Gee, 2011; B. Street, 1997, 2003; B. V. Street, 2005), Jewish literacy has become to some scholars the Jewish reading practices that identify the readers as people who belong within a general or specific group of Jews (Cashman, 2015; El-Or, 2002; Lehmann, 2008). These scholars hold that being literate in Jewish texts is not simply an ability to read texts at a certain level of proficiency, but to read them in a way that specifically engages the student with other Jewish readers.

From the perspective of envisioning literacy as a subjective cultural practice, researchers find that Modern Orthodox Jewish students in the U.S. experience a tension between secular literacy practices taught in ELA classrooms and Jewish literacy practices taught in courses such as the Bible or Rabbinics (Hassenfeld, 2016; Lehmann, 2008). Whereas ELA courses encourage students to adopt autonomous interpretations, creating a direct connection between reader and text, Jewish courses teach students to submit to interpretations posited by pre-approved classical, medieval, and upon rare occasion a handful of Modern Rabbinic authorities. This difference in literacy pedagogy is rarely explicitly discussed with students and contributes to students' beliefs that Judaic studies are less academically rigorous (Lehmann, 2008). Just as troubling, if not more so, most scholars writing about the goals of Jewish education from a theoretical perspective believe that Jewish literacy education should train students to adopt autonomous readings of Jewish texts that are both respectful to what the text represents while also being able to articulate how they personally react to and relate to the text (Brinker, 2003; Holtz, 1999; Shkedi, 1997; Twersky, 2003). For example, Rosenak (2003) writes that an educated Jew is a Jew familiar with “foundational literature that establishes Jewish culture or Judaism in the world” (p. 184) and while Jewish educators will “feel obligated to pass [tradition] on to children...The educated Jew will wish to articulate criticism to others who are significant to him or her.” (p. 188). Thus, there is an ongoing disconnect between theory and practice in teaching traditional Jewish Hebrew texts. This disconnect has several ramifications in Jewish education and Jewish life in the US; this article focuses on its ramifications in grappling with gender equality among Jews.

The Ramifications of Reading Authoritatively and Jewish Feminism

There are many ramifications of Jews' navigation between authority and autonomy to be found within Jewish education. However, Modern Orthodox feminism proves to be a scenario where the tensions of authority and autonomy appear to be in play. As Modern Orthodoxy encourages Jews to live traditional Jewish lives alongside modern secular ones, is perhaps not surprising then that Modern Orthodoxy continues to struggle with determining the role that women play in society, where they are encouraged to be men's equals in secular life, but then are given statuses unequal to men in Jewish issues such as ritual practices, educational opportunities, marriage, and particularly divorce law (Fishman, 1995; Trencher, 2017). In fact, Waxman (2019)

notes, “One outstanding issue over which [the major factions of American Orthodox Jewry] divide is the role and status of women in Judaism and in society.” (p. 30).

While the Jewish feminist movement had existed decades earlier (Fishman, 1995), the Modern Orthodox feminist movement was started by Blu Greenberg (1981) and her text *On Women and Judaism*. Since then, the Modern Orthodox feminist movement has made great strides in increasing the visibility of women’s issues, created greater opportunities for women to study Jewish topics and practice in Jewish prayers and rituals, and other issues (Cashman, 2015). In general, the goal of Jewish feminism has not been to abandon tradition, but to reinterpret tradition in ways that replace misogynist practices and readings with ones that increase women’s opportunities and place them on a more even ground with men (Avishai, 2008; El-Or, 2002; Hauptman, 2019; Zion-Waldoks, 2015).

At the same time, there remains significant pushback from Modern Orthodox authorities. For example, Hartman (2007), writing from a feminist perspective, notes how readily reforms were made in science education in contrast to questioning patriarchal authority and putting it in jeopardy. She reflects that ultimately, those in power portray feminism as irreconcilable with Modern Orthodoxy, suggesting that to accept feminist thinking would undermine Modern Orthodox Judaism at its foundation.

Modern Orthodox Jewish educators, consciously or otherwise, tend to teach authoritative, normative understandings of how women and men are expected to behave in Jewish life (Cashman, 2015; Gorsetman & Sztokman, 2013). When teaching a Jewish text that depicts genders as unequal, educators explicitly choose to adopt an authoritative teaching stance—generally one that is apologetic to the text (Beliak, 2013). In Beliak’s study, many teachers voiced hesitancy in allowing students to voice their own critique due to a concern that if they do not offer a consistently positive view of traditional Jewish texts, heroes, and morality, students will feel that Judaism itself is less rich, and leave the religious community. Unfortunately, by reinforcing traditional readings around gender, educators make inequality seem less apparent or problematic and suppresses pro-women readings.

This study explores the use of graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish texts as a pedagogical intervention. Some effort thus needs to be placed on understanding the potential that the medium has to offer. That is the focus of the final section in this literature review.

Graphic Novel Adaptations and Their Potential

Graphic novels, a subset of the comics medium, uses both verbal and visual languages (McCloud, 1993; Sousanis, 2015). While graphic novels themselves have only existed since Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (1985), comics adaptations of the Bible have existed as early as the 1950s (Graham & Nodel, 1956). Today, there are numerous graphic novel adaptations of the Bible written from Jewish, Christian, as well as interfaith and atheist perspectives (Freeman & Rosenzweig, 2010; Russell, 2016; Smith, 2011; Wolverson & Geissman, 2009). While there are fewer adaptations of rabbinic texts or other traditional Jewish texts, a handful exist (e.x., Deutsch, 2017; Eisner et al., 2014).

Through visual and verbal means, graphic novels create explicit and implicit messages on how men and women should look and behave. Through content analysis, scholars have theorized how comics can undermine ideas of gender in classic texts (Chute, 2018). Other qualitative studies have charted how activists, students, and others have used comics to engage in gender-based discussions (Chattopadhyay, 2017; Dallacqua & Low, 2019a). Additionally, scholarship on comics in the educational sphere has found that graphic novels both motivated students and led to greater complexity and creativity in students’ analysis (Brenna, 2013). Thus, researchers have noted that graphic novels provide rich opportunities to have serious conversations with students about gender (Dallacqua & Low, 2019b). Additionally, graphic novel adaptations are hypothesized to encourage readers to adopt reading practices that are more personal and creative from those typically observed when reading the source material in a classroom environment.

However, as an often-marginalized and “low-brow” medium ensconced in popular culture (Sabeti, 2011), less is done understanding how readers weigh the importance of the messages found in graphic novels in comparison to potentially conflicting messages found in their everyday lives. Students have previously noted that they do not see graphic novels as classroom texts (Moeller, 2016). This could mean that graphic novels, being more accessible and less high-brow, may open students up to voicing criticism. At the same time, however, the critiques found in the graphic novel adaptation may be seen as less valid than authoritative readings done in the original text. These critiques and others form the foundation of my study, explained in the Methodology section below.

Methods

Research Questions

I looked at Jewish literacies and discourses used (and not used) when reading graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish texts with specific interest in the following questions:

1. How do adolescent girls respond to graphic novels adaptations of Jewish texts that cast women in an unequal role vis a vis men?
2. In what ways do students conceptually frame graphic novels adaptations of Jewish texts in order to understand, and discuss them?
3. In what ways does the graphic novel medium allow students to engage in autonomous understandings of Biblical and rabbinic texts?

Theoretical Framework

This study was theoretically framed on multimodality theory and Gee’s (2011) discourse theory. Multimodality theory argues that “meanings are made (as well as distributed, interpreted and remade) through many representational and communicational resources, of which language is but one” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 246). Multimodality theory thus enables a nuanced and detailed understanding of how the adapter re-tells traditional Jewish texts across different modes, piecing apart the written text largely copied from traditional Jewish texts and the visual text created by

the adapter (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). Additionally, it allows me to focus on the elements of the text that readers are noticing and commenting on and pinpoint whether these are illustrated, written, and whether they originate from the text being adapted or are unique to the graphic novel.

Discourse theory more explicitly moves the focus from the artifact (here, the graphic novel) to its reception, providing a means to understand how readers contextualize graphic novel adaptations within the multiple literacies and ideologies available to them (Gee, 2011; Lehmann, 2008). Within research of Jewish education, discourse theory has allowed researchers to distinguish and identify how literate Jews navigate between modernity and tradition, Judaism and the secular world through the way that they talk about texts (Cashman, 2015; Lehmann, 2008; Lipsky, 2016). I drew on discourse theory to identify under what frameworks students situate and make sense of graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish texts.

Design and Data Collection

This study adopted the research design of Gottlieb and Wineburg's (2012) study on how individuals employed religious ideologies when reading historical documents. Data was primarily collected through think-aloud of selections from three texts: *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* by Robert Crumb (2009), *Megillat Esther* by Jeffery (JT) Waldman (2005), and *The Illustrated Pirkei Avot* by Jessica Deutch (2017) (See "Materials" section for the rationale behind selecting each text). I met with each participant three times, covering one text per meeting, and followed the think-aloud with a semi-structured interview to probe the reading experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) more thoroughly. Prior to think-aloud and semi-structured interviews, participant completed a demographic survey for triangulation purposes (Greene et al., 1989).

Each think-aloud and interview, lasting up to 45 minutes, was doubly recorded and transcribed by the researcher. During transcription, I attempted to capture both the exact words used in the conversation as well as speech patterns, affectations, and idiosyncrasies. All participants used Hebrew and, at times, Yiddish loan words, which I included in the transcript. When transcribing each think-aloud, I noted when characters' Hebrew names were used instead of the English version of the characters names (generally used by the adapters).

Participants

I met with three girls who self-identified as Modern Orthodox and attending a Modern Orthodox Jewish day school in the New York metropolitan area (i.e., a private school that includes both a general studies curriculum traditionally found in secular public schools and a Jewish studies curriculum that covers subjects such as Bible, Rabbinics, and the Hebrew language). The three girls – Layla, Ronnie, and Avigayil (all pseudonyms) – were 14-15 at the time of the interviews and identified as belonging to three different subsections of Modern Orthodox Judaism, with Layla being the most liberal and Avigayil the most conservative. All three reported studying Jewish topics at least several hours each day in and out of school and all continued their Jewish education during the summer at Jewish camps. More specifically, all three had previously read and formally studied the Biblical texts in co-educational classes (i.e.,

boys and girls attended the same classes) being adapted in graphic novel format and all had familiarity with some of the rabbinic writings. Of the three, only Ronnie had also studied the rabbinic text adapted into graphic novel format.

Materials

I chose selections from three different graphic novels: when Abram and Sarai go down to Egypt in *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* (2009, Chapter 12: 10-20), the Vashti narrative from JT Waldman’s *Megillat Esther* (2005, pp. 14–24), and *mishnayot* 1-12 in *The Illustrated Pirkei Avot* (Deutsch, 2017, pp. 10–19). These selections all had at the very least, an unabridged English translation of the text and the writers had to deal with potentially misogynistic readings and interpretations of the texts. The unabridged translation added a layer of authenticity to the adaptation and allowed me to piece apart when participants reacted to the graphic novel itself and when they reacted to the Biblical and rabbinic narratives and texts. A summary of each text and how they contributed to answering my research questions can be found in an appendix to this article.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). While collecting data, I was writing memos reflecting both on my findings, theories, and methods. This allowed me to subsequently identify themes with which I could compare the nine think-aloud texts and semi-structured interviews, using matrices to better allow me to see overarching themes as well as particular details (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process was iterated until theories were fully formed.

Findings

Graphic Novel #1: Crumb

Before the think-aloud, participants were asked to summarize the events in Genesis to the best of their memory, along with a description of the main characters – Abram, Sarai, and Pharaoh. After the think-aloud, I asked how the characters’ portrayal in the graphic novel adaptation was similar or different to their initial beliefs. I then compared the two-character descriptions, asking to what degree did readers adopt a traditional or a critical reading. As discussed in the methods section, traditional Jewish understanding of the story places Abram and Sarai as heroes while Pharaoh is the antagonist. A critical feminist discourse places Sarai as a victim, Abram’s decision as dubious, and Pharaoh’s moral status as unclear—it is questionable whether or not Pharaoh would have killed Abram to wed Sarai had he known that the two were married (McKinlay, 1998).

Students’ opinions of the three characters in the Genesis narrative – Abram, Sarai, and Pharaoh – were influenced by their reading of Crumb’s adaptation and they all changed their opinion of at least one of the characters after reading the graphic novel. Avigayil became increasingly critical of Abram, initially saying that Abram was an “amazing figure” and, after the think-aloud, reported, “[Abram] just didn’t seem amazing to me” in the adaptation. She additionally recognized in the adaptation that Sarai may not have been happy to help Abram the way she did. Whereas Avigayil previously

described Sarai as someone who “goes along with everything,” she noted during the think-aloud that Sarai “looked mad in every picture.”

Ronnie and Layla initially placed almost all of the blame on Pharaoh and, after the think-aloud, became increasingly critical of Abram’s choices. Layla had the most extreme change of opinion. While she initially shared, “Maybe it was acceptable then, but it seems wrong [for Pharaoh] just to, like, kill someone ‘cause their wife is pretty,” she later reported that Pharaoh “doesn’t seem too bad because he didn’t realize that she was someone else’s wife.” Regarding Abram, Layla noted, “Well he doesn’t seem like such a good person. Because he’s, like, forcing his wife to marry [Pharaoh]- I mean, I guess because he wants to save his life so she would- if she actually loved him she would probably agree, but what if she didn’t?” Ronnie maintained during and after the think-aloud that Pharaoh’s actions were reproachable, sharing, “[Pharaoh] just takes whatever he sees he feels is beautiful.” However, she also reported after the think-aloud that Abram behaved in a “weird” way, complicating and challenging the traditional narrative.

Overall, participants’ changes of opinions were generally more critical of Abram, and while they never saw Sarai as a victim in the narrative, they noted that her depiction suggested she was dissatisfied with the way her husband and Pharaoh treated her. This suggests that Crumb’s graphic novel adaptation increased student’s awareness of, if not allowed students to adopt, interpretations of the Biblical narrative that are more critical of the gender imbalances found therein.

Graphic Novel #2: Waldman

Before the think-aloud, participants were asked to summarize the events in the first chapter of the Book of Esther to the best of their memory, along with a description of the main characters – Achashverosh and Vashti. After the think-aloud, I asked how the characters’ portrayal in the graphic novel adaptation was similar or different to their initial beliefs. In my analysis, I compared their descriptions of the characters and narrative to their comments during the think-aloud and their reflections during the semi-structured interview that followed.

Students’ opinions of Achashverosh remained unchanged as they all were initially critical of the demands he placed on Vashti, thus already sharing Waldman’s opinion of Achashverosh. However, all participants after reading Waldman’s adaptation were more aware of Vashti’s agency, power, and generally thought more positively of her after reading the adaptation. Ronnie particularly praised Waldman’s adaptation for being a feminist representation of the narrative:

- Ronnie I like [Waldman’s adaptation because Waldman] kind of shows the more feminist side of the story...
- Researcher Might I ask for clarification? Um, you said that the Megillat Esther is a bit of a more feminist -?
- Ronnie Yeah.
- Researcher Can you explain what you mean by that?

- Ronnie Well, we read, we looked through the scene where Vashti is being asked to come before Achashverosh. And that's always been a very unsettling scene, but I like the way she [Waldman] depicted her [Vashti] as a strong person and not just as, like, Achashverosh's servant.
- Researcher Okay. How has it been unsettling?
- Ronnie Um, well, like with the midrashim [Hebrew: Rabbinic exegesis] where she's covered in boils or whatever and he's disgusted by her but also wants her to par- wants her to come naked and parade before men. That's just upsetting.

Before the think-aloud, Ronnie described Vashti as someone “played with [by the king] and then leaves so is a symbol of [the king's total] power.” Note that this change not only allows Ronnie to see Vashti as someone with power, but Ronnie also wholeheartedly accepts and appreciates this interpretation.

While Avigayil and Layla were not as explicit about seeing Vashti as a feminist, they shared similar reactions to Ronnie. Avigayil noted, “[Before reading the adaptation] I thought, like, oh obviously it's horrible. Like, [Achashverosh] wanted [Vashti] to come just for her crown. But I never pictured her like also she's doing her own thing as a queen.” After reading the adaptation, Layla reported, “When I first learned [Vashti's story in the Book of Esther] I thought ‘Oh, Vashti. She did something wrong.’ But now I realize maybe she didn't do something wrong.”

Graphic Novel #3: Deutch

Because Pirkei Avot is a series of ethical mantras and more difficult to remember in its entirety, participants were not expected to have prior opinions about the text's instruction that all who speak with women will inherit hell. Instead, their reactions to the mantra as well as their reactions to the adapter explicitly calling the mantra “shocking” were explored and recorded. This distinction was made because disagreeing with a text and critiquing a text are two different actions. Deutch's adaptation created an opportunity to consider this distinction.

Of the three adaptations, participants' reactions to Deutch's adaptation were the most varied among the three participants. Avigayil was not critical of the original text, sharing her belief that “[Judaism is] just not an egalitarian religion.” She therefore felt Deutch's admonishment inappropriate. Ronnie, while disagreeing with the separation between genders called for in Pirkei Avot and saying, “I'd like to think that everybody does consider women and men to be equally valuable,” was aware of the plurality of opinions among Modern Orthodoxy and was thus uncomfortable with Deutch's critique:

I mean, she's saying ‘our society,’ but like, which part of our society? I don't think - that's a very broad statement... So she could say, like, ‘This was like the norm back then and it's kind of changed.’ But jumping to that and saying, like, women and men weren't equally valuable then - I don't know if that's so true.

Unlike Ronnie and Avigayil, Layla both disagreed with the original text and was comfortable with Deutch's critique.

- Layla Like, you know, like this [points to Mishna 5] part?
- Researcher Okay, let's talk - let's talk about this.
- Layla No one will actually. I mean, HOPEFULLY no one will actually do that.
- Researcher Right, yeah.
- Layla Like - and the fact that the author of the book notes that it's the shocking thing. Shows something about-
- Researcher Yeah. If you - I'm curious would you have - what would you have done if you had to do an adaptation of this, like regardless of-
- Layla I mean, obviously we would have to put it in.
- Researcher Right.
- Layla Because yeah. And you have to think what do they mean by that, though? Like, do - do they actually think that talking to women will just distract you and it only can lead to bad things? Do they actually believe that?

In short, all three participants had different opinions of the validity of the *mishna* as well as the appropriateness of Deutch's critique. The effectiveness of this particular graphic novel, therefore, is particularly unclear.

The Medium's Effect on Participants' Readings

In this section, I explore the impact that the medium itself had on participants' critiques. Effectively: would participants have made the same observations and critiques had they simply re-read the narrative in their respective source texts?

Many of their reactions during the think-aloud were specifically to Crumb's illustrations, suggesting that the medium itself and Crumb's interpretation of the Biblical text is what influenced their understanding of the Biblical narrative. For example, Avigayil noted in her think-aloud her discomfort with Abram and Sarai leaving people to starve in Canaan:

[Reading:] "And it came to pass as he drew near to the border of Egypt that he said to Sarai his wife, 'Look here now I know that my wife is beautiful to behold!'" ... I never really thought about - like, this kinda struck me. These people [pointing to starving beggars in background as Abram as Sarai are traveling out on camels] because I never thought about, like, whenever I see the word 'famine,' I only just picture the main characters like [Abram]. Like, okay they're leaving. So I [didn't] actually think that there are people dying and - like, in a famine and that's really cool.

Ronnie makes note of the way Crumb chooses to depict the ill and bed-ridden Pharaoh, noting, "It's like the first we see him, and he looks awful and very old and wrinkled and, like, kind of shows the terrible morality of this scene. That, like, he just takes whatever he sees he feels is beautiful." Note the emphasis she places on the

visuals in sharing the moral messaging behind the story: this is not the first time we hear about Pharaoh in the narrative, but it is the first time she sees Crumb’s detailed illustration of him. The fact that it “shows” the terrible morality is to be taken literally. Reflecting generally on graphic novel adaptations of traditional texts, Ronnie notes, “When you go and, like, give a drawing to an event you, like, change it - change how people look at it.”

Unlike Ronnie and Avigayil, Layla’s comments during the think-aloud were almost entirely in response to the written instead of drawn elements of the adaptation. Like Avigayil, she noted that the images were different from what she expected, but she found images to be subjective and thus somewhat unimportant: “So sometimes I don’t think - like, I don’t imagine the people to look like what they look like in the pictures? And I mean, it doesn’t really matter all that much because no one really knows what they look like. And so it’s just artists’ interpretations.” Instead, when asked about what makes images useful—if at all, Layla responds, “I like the illustrations because sometimes it helps people to look at, you know, pictures of what’s going on?” and in a later think-aloud and interview shares that pictures are useful because, “Well, they give an example.” Considering the graphic novel from Layla’s perspective, it allowed her to engage in a critique of the text by making the text both more accessible and understandable than would she have read it in the original.

Discussion

Adolescents, through graphic novel adaptations of traditional Jewish texts are able to engage in critical readings of the source material. During the various think-aloud texts and interviews, all three participants mention and allude to their past imaginings of these narratives and the characters found therein. The imagined narratives included details not mentioned in the source text and include women’s fashion and modesty, the way characters looked and gestured, and characters’ engagement with society at large. Participants further admitted that while they inherently imagined scenes to unfold in a certain way, they never spent time deeply considering the assumptions such imagined details led them to making.

While reading the three graphic novel adaptations, participants experienced moments of tension and dissonance when the adaptation disagreed with rabbinic narratives taught in formal and informal settings of Jewish education as well as imagined narratives that participants took for granted. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when in conflict with rabbinically sanctioned narratives, such as Deutch’s critique in *The Illustrated Pirkei Avot*, graphic novels were less successful at generating critique from the readers themselves. It is notable that the only person who fully accepted Deutch’s critique of *Pirkei Avot* – Layla – self-identified as the most liberal of the three participants within Modern Orthodoxy Jewry on her survey upon entering this study. However, graphic novels were considerably more successful at having participants challenge their previously imagined and implicitly accepted narratives.

When experiencing dissonance between graphic novel adaptations and the way they imagined these holy texts and narratives, readers all enacted their own agency by either agreeing with the adaptations’ criticism of gender inequality or, despite disagreeing, recognizing the validity of having an interpretation of traditional texts that

is respectful yet critical such as the adaptations they read. As such, graphic novels provide a successful means of encouraging autonomous understandings of texts—even when such understandings ultimately conform with Jewish authorities.

Implications

For educators such as those interviewed by Beliak (2013), afraid to give students the independence to make their own conclusions, the findings of this study suggest that at the high school level, readers are able to successfully navigate critical readings of traditional Jewish texts while maintaining a positive Jewish identity. Graphic novel adaptations effectively exposed readers to modern feminist critiques, which readers in turn partially or entirely accepted or rejected based on their own beliefs about Judaism's place in modern society. Educators considering ways to increase students' autonomy in their analyses of Jewish texts are encouraged to consider graphic novels.

This study considered three students from a particular Jewish day school and, because it was set outside of a classroom environment, was unable to assess the effect of their enrollment in this particular school. My study has since expanded to include two other Jewish Modern Orthodox schools, one of which is an all-girls school. This expansion will allow across-school comparisons to highlight any potential biases certain schools have with regards to openness to engage in critique. Additionally, worth considering are Modern Orthodox adolescents who do not attend Jewish Day Schools, or adolescents who attend Jewish Day School that do not identify as Modern Orthodox Day Schools and measure any differences therein.

Considering the graphic novel as a medium that engages in visual literacy—a skill which is often not explicitly taught—further attention can be given to considering the degree to which participants' ability to read images affects their ability to engage in critique. To do so would require a study that initially measures participants' ability to engage in graphic novels as multimodal devices. Some tools to measure such skills have been created (e.x., Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018) and should be brought into future research on the impact of graphic novels.

In summation, graphic novels did not drastically change readers' opinions about gender in traditional Jewish texts but instead provided moments of dissonance that readers experienced while reading. These moments had to be navigated by readers drawing from their backgrounds, prior knowledge, and experience. As a result, critiques and texts readers enacted were personally meaningful and more closely reflected the goals of Jewish literacy education previously not observed in practice.

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Appendix

I have included below a summary of each text and how they each contributed to answering my research questions.

The Book of Genesis Illustrated: Abram and Sarai's Sojourn to Egypt

Introducing his adaptation, Crumb (2009) noted several details critical in understanding his role as an adapter. First, Crumb approaches the text not out of religious belief but out of academic interest. Instead of using Jewish rabbinic exegesis, he draws from contemporary Biblical scholarship. Additionally, Crumb notes that the gender politics happening during Biblical times and shortly thereafter was a perspective he used to enrich his visual storytelling. Robert Alter, in his review of Crumb's adaptation, notes the story of Lot and his two daughters as one example of Crumb's take on gender politics at the time (Alter, 2009). Another example—one that is less sexually explicit and was therefore used in this study—is that of Sarai and Abram in Egypt.

The narrative opens with a famine in Canaan, and Abram and Sarai (whose names were later changed to Abraham and Sarah) travel to Egypt where there is still plenty. Abram instructs Sarai to pretend that they are brother and sister because Pharaoh would kill Abram in order to add Sarai—a beautiful but married woman—to his harem. When they arrive in Egypt, this is exactly what happens. Abram tells Pharaoh and his courtiers that Sarai is his sister and Pharaoh, instead of killing Abram, gives him much wealth and takes Sarai. At this point, God intervenes and sends a plague to Pharaoh's house and Pharaoh somehow learns that Sarai is Abram's wife, not sister. Pharaoh confronts Abram about this, returns Sarai to Abram, and expels them from Egypt, alive and wealthier.

From a feminist perspective, this passage is problematic (McKinlay, 1998). Sarai, throughout the narrative, is given no voice. At a more extreme end, one could argue that Abram compelled Sarai to lie, putting her at risk of being raped by Pharaoh, while he received great wealth. While the Biblical narrative provides Sarai with no dialogue, Crumb's adaptation meticulously illustrates Sarai having an opinion and a voice in her facial expressions and reactions. Crumb specifically draws her as confused, sad, and incredulous as the events of the story unfold around her and arguably affect her safety and well-being.

Jewish education has traditionally held Abram and Sarai as unimpeachable figures. Fearful that feminist criticism would deter students from making personal connections with their Jewish identities, educators refrain from sharing such perspectives, and instead teach this story using strategies designed to make patriarchal narratives more palatable (Beliak, 2013). As a result, Crumb's representation of this Biblical narrative serves as a break from the narrative as it is traditionally taught. The primary research question when using *The Book of Genesis Illustrated* was therefore: *would participants become more critical of Abram and sympathetic to Sarai's trial after reading Crumb's adaptation?*

Megillat Esther: The Story of Achashverosh and Vashti

Waldman’s work has roots both in Jewish culture as well as the world of comics creators and graphic novelists. Throughout this adaptation, Waldman includes both rabbinic exegesis as well as his own interpretations, generally using techniques found in the comics medium such as thought balloons with images to literally depict individuals’ thoughts and motives. The graphic novel includes both the unabridged Hebrew text, an original translation, and interludes drawn from rabbinic exegesis as well as his own creative vision.

All this can be observed in his retelling of Queen Vashti’s fall from grace in the first chapter of the Book of Esther. In the story, King Achashverosh and Queen Vashti both hold independent celebratory feasts. During the king’s feast, Achashverosh requests that Vashti come to his feast to show off her beauty. Vashti refuses, angering the king. The king turns to his advisors for advice and one of them, Memuchan, notes that Vashti’s transgressions must be punished lest all women scorn their husbands. As a result, the king punishes Vashti by exiling her and eventually giving her royal title to a new woman—Esther.

Feminists have championed Vashti’s choice to refuse the king, yet as the logical foil to Esther – the Jewish heroine of the Purim story—rabbis are often ambivalent about her (i.e., Adelman, 2014; Cohen, 1996; Gendler, 1976; Nadar, 2002; Reimer, 1998; Rosen, 2010). This tension is not alien to Waldman. Vashti rejects the king with a sneer on her face, while stating, “I’m no stable boy’s plaything” (p. 16); she is given gender-positive dialogue but is drawn in an unflattering way.

For the purposes of this study, *Megillat Esther* represents an approach to graphic novel adaptations that are both more religiously traditional, more innovative, and more complex than Crumb’s *Book of Genesis Illustrated*. My primary question when using *Megillat Esther* was therefore: *would readers think more positively of Vashti as a feminist role model and more negatively about Achashverosh after reading Waldman’s adaptation?*

The Illustrated Pirkei Avot: Does One Inherit Hell After Speaking with Women?

The Jewish text *Pirkei Avot* is not found within the Bible. The text is instead a compilation of Jewish aphorisms on morality created by rabbis around the first century of the Common Era and is generally well-known among Modern Orthodox Jews. In some Jewish communities, it is customary to read from *Pirkei Avot* every Sabbath, and its entire text is included in many Jewish prayer books. *Pirkei Avot* is divided into five chapters, each containing some amount of *mishnayot* (singular: *mishna*), a unit akin to an article in legal documents.

In her adaptation, Deutch helps explain *Pirkei Avot* using parenthetical asides within her panels. Most of the asides provide background information, such as identifying the texts found in the Torah, or that there were seven women and 46 men who were prophets. Within the entire text, there is only one parenthetical aside that is critical commentary on *Pirkei Avot*—a comment about *mishna* 5.

Deutch's translation of *mishna 5* is as follows:

Yose son of Yochanan says, let your home be open wide, & let the poor be members of your home. Do not engage in excessive chatter with your wife & certainly not with someone else's wife. From this the wise derive that all who speak too much with women cause trouble for themselves, will be distracted from Torah study, & in the end will inherit 'Gehinom,' hell. (Deutsch, 2017, p. 15)

Jewish scholars have noted that an ongoing tension in Jewish texts is that they appear to fear having men and women—particularly men and women not married to each other—interacting. Some scholars, in an effort to bring rabbinic thought and rulings into a framework more synchronous with modern-day morality, have noted that these rulings and opinions were at the time forward-thinking, making Jewish law more protective of women's rights than previous Biblical laws were (Hauptman, 2019). Other scholars have additionally noted a wide divergence in rabbinic thought and rulings, even among the composers of *mishnayot*, and those voices that disenfranchise women constitute a minority among the opinions (Sassoon, 2011). Still, as the status of women in Modern Orthodox Judaism continues to be debated, this text is closest among my three texts to the controversies experienced today.

Deutch in her adaptation addresses this controversial *mishna* by immediately following the *mishna* writing, "Clearly this passage is shocking! In our society we now consider men & women to be equally valuable." (Deutch, 2017, p.15). This is therefore an adaptation that most explicitly suggests the original text is problematic and potentially outdated. The primary research question when using *Illustrated Pirkei Avot* was twofold, asking: (1) *Do readers, after reading Deutch's adaptation, critique the Mishna?* and (2) *Do readers feel that Deutch's admonishment of the mishna is the correct and appropriate thing to do?*

Imagining Multimodal and Translanguaging Possibilities for Authentic Cultural Writing Experiences

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This article proposes ways to authentically amplify writer's workshop for emergent bilinguals. Through the study of one bilingual teacher's mediation in teaching, we examined the affordances that translanguaging and transmodal practices have for emergent bilingual students' writing processes. In this case study, we focused on a writing sequence associated with the well-known Latin American holiday of the Day of the Dead, in which 3rd grade emergent bilinguals wrote "calaveras," or literary poems, as part of an interdisciplinary language arts and social studies lesson. Our work is framed by sociocultural theories of mediation, literacy, and language. Under a multiliteracies pedagogy, we observed how a bilingual teacher and emergent bilinguals negotiate meaning through a variety of linguistic and multimodal resources. In our interactional analysis of talk, we found how the teacher mediated background knowledge and vocabulary as a part of the writing process; we also identified ways in which her mediation included extensive scaffolding as she provided linguistic and disciplinary knowledge needed to write calaveras. Through integrating the tenets of mediation with biliteracy, multiliteracies, and translanguaging pedagogies, this study offers a promising example of how teachers can build a culturally-sustaining writers' workshop to support emergent bilingual learners' language development and writing practices.

Keywords: biliteracy, cultural practices, disciplinary knowledge, emergent bilinguals, poems, translanguaging, transmodality, writer's workshop, writing

Writers' Workshop¹ has become a mainstay in literacy education, developing over three decades ago as an instructional framework to apprentice young learners into the craft of writing. The framework is based on four principles: students will (1) write

about their own lives, (2) use a consistent writing process, (3) write in authentic ways, and (4) develop independence as writers (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983). Within this framework, teachers model writing practices and strategies with short mini-lessons and provide additional guidance during one-on-one conferencing throughout the writing process (Calkins, 1994; Ray & Laminack, 2001). While Writers' Workshop has long been touted as an effective pedagogical approach for supporting young writers (Calkins et al., 2005; Graves, 1983; Kissel, 2017), scholars have questioned the efficacy of the model to support emergent bilingual² (EB) writers, particularly when their teachers are unprepared to mediate language development alongside writing (Escamilla & Hopewell, 2013; Peyton et al., 1994).

Translanguaging and Writer's Workshop

In response, an emerging line of inquiry considers how teachers can support EB writers by integrating translanguaging within writing (Canagarajah, 2011; Gort, 2006, 2012; Pacheco & Smith, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014). Translanguaging emphasizes the creative and critical agency enacted by language users who fluidly integrate linguistic resources (e.g., language systems, dialects), registers (e.g., everyday speech, formal writing) and modes (e.g., images, sound, text, animation) according to their purposes for communication (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2017). When translanguaging is adopted as pedagogy, the "locus of control" is situated in "the students' active use of language," thus centering the learners' voices and choices (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 391). The teacher not only leverages the learners' language and cultural practices to promote the development of their disciplinary language and content knowledge but recognizes learners' full meaning-making repertoires as "both informing *and* informed by classroom instruction" (García et al., 2017, p. 28).

Like translanguaging, the Writers' Workshop centers the learners' agency, specifically with regard to how their intended purposes and audiences inform their rhetorical decisions (Calkins, 1994). In her study of six Spanish-English bilingual children in a first-grade class in Texas, Durán (2017) found that EBs' engagement with an audience-focused curriculum informed the linguistic and rhetorical decisions they made in drafting and revision. Also, it was found that the teacher's questioning during conferences promoted EBs' awareness of audience throughout the writing process. In another study, Rowe (2018) incorporated translanguaging pedagogy to support multimodal composition among her multilingual second grade writers; she emphasized the importance of providing authentic opportunities for students to engage in writing to communicate with bi- and multilingual audiences. At the middle school level, Pacheco and Smith (2015) investigated how eighth grade students integrated languages and multiple modes in digital compositions when afforded the opportunity to choose their purpose and audience for writing within the workshop model. The authors analyzed students' "multimodal codemeshing", which refers to "how students translanguage when composing multimodal texts" (p. 293). Their study revealed that students chose to integrate multiple languages and modes (i.e., audio recordings, text, images) in their writing to "convey multidimensional and nuanced meanings" and engage multiple audiences (p. 308). Together these studies suggest young EB learners demonstrate awareness of audience and rhetorical astuteness within the context of Writers'

Workshop when afforded opportunities to choose their purposes, audiences, and means for composition. (See also Buell et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2017.)

Writers' Workshop also integrates apprenticeship and collaboration as an authentic component of the writing process, which extant research suggests can mediate EB writers' development. Gort (2012) found that collaborative structures embedded within parallel English/Spanish Writers' Workshops promoted talk among EB first grade writers, who employed oral code-switching for self-reflection, evaluation, and regulation of their writing processes. In other cases, students developed awareness of audience through opportunities to collaborate throughout the writing workshop, such as in Axelrod and Cole's (2018) study of a before-school program for EB elementary students. The authors found that the flexible and collaborative nature of this multilingual setting required students to engage in "negotiation of language, language choice, and awareness of audience and multiple perspectives" with their mentors and peers (p. 148). They found that young EB writers' interaction supported the development of sophisticated consideration of audience, consciously integrating orthographic and syntactic resources across their full linguistic repertoires based on their purposes for writing. Likewise, Bauer et al. (2017) found that peer interactions among Latina/o and African American students played an important role in shaping their writing in a dual-language classroom, where buddy pairs "became a vehicle for supporting translanguaging," and mediated movement from orally sharing ideas to capturing them in writing (p. 22). As these studies reveal, opportunities to translanguage through peer interaction within the Writers' Workshop facilitate the development of EBs' writing practices.

Like peer interaction, teacher mediation is central to the Writers' Workshop, where the teacher models effective practices, engages learners in collaborative writing, and provides individualized support during writing conferences. However, the extent to which peer and teacher mediation support EBs' chosen purposes, audiences, and compositional practices for writing depends on whether their linguistic and cultural resources are invited into the classroom as illustrated in Brown (2009) and Ranker (2009). Brown (2009) observed a second-grade teacher's writing instruction, focusing on Juan, one of the two EB students, to examine what linguistic literacy practices he used. Though his writing was scaffolded by teacher modeling, conferencing, and peer interactions, Brown found that Juan's home linguistic/cultural resources were excluded by his teacher and peers. As a result, he avoided using Spanish in class and revised his writing to move away from his family's cultural mode of storytelling to mimic his teacher's linear approach more closely. We compare this study with Ranker's (2009), which considered the writing development of six first grade EBs in Ms. Stevens's sheltered English as a second language classroom. Ranker investigated what elements of their teacher's collaborative writing practice the students adopted and how they hybridized these elements with their own cultural and linguistic resources. Unlike the teacher in Brown's study, Ms. Stevens is bilingual and explicitly encouraged her students to use Spanish, despite the restrictive language policy at her school.

While these two studies highlight the important role of teacher mediation within the Writers' Workshop, less is known about the role of teacher mediation to support translanguaging and transmodal composition to support EBs' writing, which is the

purpose of our study. Specifically, we investigate how one third grade bilingual teacher mediates EB students' writing in a dual-language classroom. We also consider whether or not these translanguaging and transmodal practices enhance or hinder students' writing processes.

In what follows, we first provide an overview of our theoretical framework, namely sociocultural theories of literacy learning as mediated action, the affordances of biliteracy and multiliteracies pedagogies, and translanguaging and transmodal mediation. We then outline our methods for this ethnographic case study before turning to our three overarching findings: developing background knowledge and key vocabulary, translanguaging and scaffolding, and critical cultural consciousness and authentic engagement. We conclude with a discussion of what this study suggests about how the traditional Writers' Workshop might be amplified for young EB writers.

Sociocultural Theories of Literacy Learning as Mediated Action

We contextualize this study in sociocultural perspectives of learning (Vygotsky, 1987) to consider the integral role social interaction plays in facilitating new language and literacy practices. We draw upon New Literacy Studies (NLS), which emphasize the situated and ideological nature of language and literacy (Gee, 2010; Street, 1984). NLS advocates conceptualize literacy as socially constructed; we employ our literacies to do something, often within social and cultural groups who "apprentice" us into different literacy identities and practices (Gee, 2010; Street, 1984). The ideological perspective of literacy acknowledges the social, cultural, and political environment of the individual and locates literacy practices within the differential power structures of society (Gee, 2010; Perry, 2012; Street, 2006).

Sociocultural perspectives also emphasize the dialogic nature of learning to write, where growing writers leverage a variety of linguistic and cultural resources to make meaning according to their intended purposes and audiences (Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch, 1993, 1998;). Drawing from Vygotsky's (1987) notion of mediation, Wertsch (1998) suggests that learning is mediated through the use of cultural tools and signs, such as spoken language, writing, and drawings, which not only mediate human action, but "[alter] the entire flow and structure of mental functions...determining the structure of a new instrumental act" (Vygotsky & Cole, 1981, p. 137). In other words, when adopted by learners, cultural tools mediate their emerging success with a new practice and the development of their mental schemas associated with that practice. Throughout this process, learners adapt cultural tools to their purposes, making them their own.

Wertsch's (1998) theorization of mediated action builds from Burke's "pentadic terms," referring not only to the dialectic between (1) learners as agents and (2) their cultural tools as mediators of action, but also (3) the scene, or sociocultural context, (4) purpose, and (5) mediated act. Analysis of mediated action can involve isolating one or more of these elements but should also consider how these elements work together. Examining these elements separately allows us to identify what affordances are associated with particular cultural tools as well as how the elements interact dialectically. As Wertsch (1998) contends, "studies of the agent or the mediational means are useful and relevant insofar as they inform us about how these elements combine to produce the mediated action" and that mediational means "can have their

impact only when an agent uses them” (p. 30). In other words, the resulting mediated action depends on whether an agent chooses certain cultural tools as mediational means and how the agent and chosen tools interact within a particular context, or scene.

In the classroom, learners and teachers bring particular cultural tools—tools that may or may not be leveraged in the classroom. According to Wertsch (1998), “[any] attempt to understand or act on reality is inherently limited by the mediational means we necessarily employ,” such as languages or modes (p. 40). In other words, the learners’ enactment of the teacher’s intended mediated action will be enhanced or hindered by the tools made available. Often the teacher determines which cultural tools, such as classroom texts or students’ linguistic and cultural resources, are invited into the classroom and how they might be adapted to enhance learning. Likewise, teachers may explicitly or implicitly communicate to learners that certain tools are excluded. That said, fundamental to Wertsch’s theory is the emphasis on the agency of the learner. Whether the learner chooses to use one set of tools versus the other—or to hybridize the two—depends on many factors, such as the affordances or constraints of certain tools. Ultimately, learners-as-agents decide whether they will adopt certain cultural tools and undertake the teacher’s intended mediated action.

This perspective connects to intertextuality theory, which refers to how students juxtapose, or relate texts during literacy events. As cultural tools, intertextual connections have to be proposed, responded to, and acknowledged by the participants before they have social significance for the classroom community (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). This practice is called “texturing” through mediation, where meaning-making processes move “from one social practice to another, from one event to another, from one text to another” (Fairclough, 2014, p. 89). From this perspective, intertextual connections between linguistic or cultural resources happen in different spaces and points of time through literacy events. Thus, cultural tools can move across time and space through teachers’ mediation.

The Affordances of Biliteracy and Multiliteracies Pedagogies in the K-12 Classroom

We integrate Wertsch’s theory of mediated action with the sociocultural biliteracy framework, which emerges from bilingual education. A sociocultural perspective of biliteracy honors EBs’ identities, home languages, cultures, and family literacy practices, which they leverage to co-construct meaning with others, such as parents, teachers, or peers (Bauer & Gort, 2012). As Moll et al. (2001) explain: “Literacy is not only related to children’s histories, but to the dynamics of the social, cultural, and institutional contexts that help define its context” (p. 447). Therefore, the biliteracy framework also considers the “sociolinguistic, sociohistorical, and sociocultural factors” of their bilingual and bicultural development. When connected with Wertsch, the biliteracy framework emphasizes what possibilities exist for young EB writers’ development when their teachers invite them to integrate their home language/cultural resources as cultural tools to mediate literacy learning.

The current study also builds on a multiliteracies approach, which derives from New Literacy Studies (Perry, 2012). A multiliteracies approach includes not only

language but also ever-changing “modes of meaning,” which are “constantly being remade by users as they work to achieve their cultural purposes” (New London Group, 1996). According to the New London Group (1996), individuals integrate six design elements in their meaning-making processes: linguistic, visual (e.g., images, page layout), audio (e.g., music, sound effects), gestural (body language), spatial (e.g., environmental and architectural spaces), and multimodal (i.e., the interrelationship of aforementioned modes; p. 80). From a multiliteracies perspective, Jewitt (2008) encourages educators to include the experiential knowledge, skills, discourses, and multimodal texts that students use in everyday life and in their communities. Consistent with our earlier discussion of ideological literacy (Street, 1984), multiliteracies pedagogy views literacy as a functional practice that is socially, culturally, and politically situated. A multiliteracies pedagogical approach (Rowse et al., 2008) integrates a variety of texts and modes as channels of representation (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 1996), where students collaborate as a community of learners to engage with texts. This includes replacing traditional literacies (i.e., linguistic, written or oral) with alternative forms (i.e., visual, audio, gestural, spatial). Importantly, minoritized and marginalized communities and their literacy practices are recognized; therefore, multiliteracies pedagogy promotes the sustenance of home language and cultural practices.

An important body of work has been conducted in educational systems outside the United States where there exists official recognition of multiliteracies theory as a pedagogical approach in their curricula (Jewitt, 2008). Recent empirical studies in Canada and Australia implement multiliteracies pedagogy following Cope and Kalantzis’s (2000) components for teaching and learning with multiliteracies (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013; Giampapa, 2010; Hepple et al., 2014; Mills, 2006; Ntelioglou, 2011; Taylor, 2008). These studies reveal what opportunities can be realized within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts through multiliteracies pedagogy, including the development of critical thinking, vocabulary, reading, and speaking skills and the expression of ideas in different modes. A multiliteracies pedagogy also promoted learner agency, collaboration, and the use of multiple modes of literacies, giving access to and empowering culturally- and linguistically-diverse students. However, fewer studies have been conducted in the U.S. to consider the implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy with a focus on culturally- and linguistically-diverse students’ learning (Macy, 2016; Skerrett, 2015; Vinogradova, 2011). The body of research above appears, as of yet, not to have explored multiliteracies pedagogy as a culturally-sustaining approach in bilingual elementary settings.

Translanguaging and Transmodal Mediation

Finally, we draw from the concepts of translanguaging and transmodality to move beyond the limitations of additive multilingual and multimodal ideologies, which still distinguish between named languages or modes as separate entities (García & Li, 2014). Instead, we observe the fluid negotiation of linguistic and modal resources in literacy classroom practices within the focal teacher and EBs’ interactions, where they employ all their meaning-making resources as “innovative ways of knowing, being, and communicating” (García et al., 2017, p. xi). We define translanguaging as language

users' fluid integration of meaning-making resources to communicate, where language is seen as a situated practice rather than a static system (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Li, 2014; Li, 2017). As a theory of language, translanguaging emphasizes "the human capacity to make meaning and the deployment of those practices...made up of linguistic signs...[and] developed in social interaction" (Blommaert et al., 2018, p. 17).

In connection with multiliteracies, translanguaging includes incorporation of "semiotic assemblages," referring not just to language, but also other multimodal cultural modes for communication, such as movement, music, and images (Pennycook, 2017, p. 278). Therefore, we recognize the importance of multimodal features for communication in the classroom and recognize language "as being multimodal itself," seeking to disrupt traditional notions of languages that often marginalize semiotic meaning-making resources (Blommaert et al., 2018, p. 30). In centering the diverse meaning-making resources leveraged by bilingual learners in the classroom we studied, we adopt a multimodal approach to translanguaging and the "interrelationship of modal resources" for meaning making (Blommaert et al., 2018, p. 115). Consequently, we understand transmodal as referring to how individuals fluidly produce and negotiate meaning by integrating different modes and recognize that all language practice is transmodal in unique and particular ways (Horner et al., 2015). In considering the interrelationship of modes and language, we analyze how individuals in this setting make meaning and expand their literacy practices. More specifically, this paper considers the affordances of multiliteracies pedagogy for emergent bilinguals by analyzing how the focal teacher mediates EB writers' bilingual and biliteracy development through integration of translanguaging and transmodal practices.

Methods

This article draws from a larger qualitative study conducted by Dr. Lucía Cárdenas Curiel during the 2015-2016 school year with the objective of understanding (bi)literacy and linguistic practices in Ms. Braun's 3rd grade dual-language classroom at Sunny Hillcrest Elementary in a central city in Texas. (Pseudonyms have been used for the names of all participants and locations in this study.) Our interest in this study began as both authors taught a literacy methods for diverse learners' course and examined the importance of incorporating language practices to support EB's writing development. We discussed the ways that data from Lucía's overall study had shown the importance of engaging with multimodal texts for authentic engagement in the classroom (Cárdenas Curiel, 2017) When Ms. Braun incorporated multimodal texts in different disciplines, EBs were able to use their linguistic repertoires flexibly and dynamically to collaborate and develop academic knowledge and biliteracy skills. Here we focus on the way that elementary EBs engage with multimodal texts during the writing process (Axelrod & Cole, 2018; Buell et al., 2011; Rowe, 2018). Therefore, we set out to answer the following research questions: How does a third-grade bilingual teacher mediate selected EB students' writing in a dual-language classroom? To what extent do multimodal literacy practices enhance or hinder the EBs' writing processes?

Context

At the time the study was conducted, Ms. Braun had taught for 15 years and had just started her third-year teaching in Sunny Hillcrest's two-way dual-language

program. This program provides instruction in Spanish and English to EB students classified as native Spanish or English speakers so that all students can develop bilingual and biliteracy skills. The classrooms are departmentalized; Ms. Braun taught language arts, science, and social studies in Spanish while her team partner, Ms. Robinson, taught language arts and mathematics in English. Ms. Braun considers Spanish to be her first language. Throughout the data used for this paper, her interactions with students were in Spanish unless otherwise indicated.

The first author observed 20 students (8 Spanish-dominant speakers and 12 English-dominant speakers). All are second-generation immigrant students except for one, who is a third-generation immigrant; his mother was also born in the US. Seven of the Spanish-dominant speakers were identified as English learners by the school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Within the larger case study, Lucía used ethnographic methods to collect data in the form of observations, interviews, and review of artifacts (Heath & Street, 2008). Observations were conducted during language arts, science, and social studies classes from October to December 2015. Lucía video and audiotaped lessons for three hours a day, three to five times a week; she also collected photographs of students' classwork (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

Lucía first employed an inductive approach to data analysis grounded in classroom observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Dyson & Genishi, 2005). During initial coding, Lucía carefully read and reread the field notes, developed connections, and organized the data by emerging patterns (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Erlandson, 1993; Stake, 1995). This phase of analysis was interpretive in that Lucía developed categories based on disciplinary expertise and conceptual frameworks (i.e., *multimodal texts*, *Spanish language*, *English language*, *experiential background*, *peer interaction*). Lucía then organized all literacy events and practices in Ms. Braun's classroom descriptively by text, disciplines, and teaching and learning strategies and wrote analytic memos (Marshall & Rossman, 2010) of emerging literacy practices patterns.

Based on emerging themes related to writing processes identified in previous analyses, we narrowed our focus for purposes of this microethnographic case study to a two-day literacy event to illuminate the moment-by-moment mediational moves made by the teacher. Coined by Erickson (2004), we employ microethnography, or "ethnographic microanalysis of social interaction" in order to consider the "conduct of talk in local social interaction in real time," namely this two-day instructional sequence in Ms. Braun's classroom. We additionally consider how this talk is shaped by cultural tools from beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of this sequence (p. viii). More specifically, we analyzed interchanges between two or more speakers as the "basic concrete unit of social activity," (Goffman, 1967, p. 19) within the context of this two-day writing sequence. By bounding our analysis of Ms. Braun's instructions to this timeframe, we were able to closely observe what micro moves she made using both linguistic and non-linguistic means to enact culturally-sustaining literacy instruction practices. Closely examining these interactions also allowed us to trace whether Ms. Braun's instruction mediated her EB students' writing processes as they composed writing products in form of "literary calaveras," which Ms. Braun's class studied to

celebrate the Day of the Dead in November. A calavera is a form of poetry written as an imaginary obituary in which someone or something still living is satirized and typically incorporate meter and rhyme; they became popular during the Mexican Revolution as a way to criticize the government. (For more information and examples, see *Día de los muertos* [2009].)

As a part of our collaborative open coding process, we followed Erickson's (2004) interactional analysis of talk in the form of "kairos," which refers to patterned forms of interaction using both verbal and nonverbal means. First, Lucía interpreted the data from Spanish to English to support Christina's comprehension of the data. Next, Christina watched again the video recordings to code the semiotic forms of mediation (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) as cultural tools within the classroom. We also employed Fairclough's (2014) definition of discourse as language in social interaction and Erickson's (2004) approach to linking the outside social world within local discourse. For that reason, we consider the named languages, or systems established by society and norms, of Spanish and English in local interactions. Finally, Lucía watched once more all video recordings to note when Ms. Braun moved from Spanish to English and vice versa.

During our second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2016), we looked for themes according to how the teacher mediated learning throughout the writing process and the extent to which EBs adopted the teacher's cultural tools. We created a table to look at the teacher's mediation, students' actions, cultural tools, and writing processes. Using Burke's five pentadic terms (Wertsch, 1998), we isolated and integrated the elements involved in EBs' learning to write calaveras as mediated action (Table 1).

Table 1

Burke's pentadic terms (Wertsch, 1998)

Agents: 20 emergent bilingual students (8 Spanish-dominant and 12 English-dominant speakers)

Scene: Ms. Braun's 3rd grade dual-language class at Sunny Hillcrest Elementary

Purpose: Compose a multimodal literary calaveras in Spanish about a deceased person

Mediated acts:

Traditional writing workshop:

- Mini-lessons (e.g., prewriting, drafting, editing/revision)
- Guided and independent writing
- Conferencing

Cultural tools:

- Videos
- Notebooks
- Teacher modeling
- Realia
- Translanguaging
- Students' cultural tools

Ms. Braun's adaptations:

- Build background knowledge
 - Frontload key vocabulary
 - Systematically scaffold writing process
-

Limitation

We acknowledge that the short time frame limits our study. Further, we do not seek to generalize the experiences of Ms. Braun and her students, but instead to show what this microethnographic snapshot reveals about how Ms. Braun's integrated multimodal literacy practices to mediate her EB students' writing.

Findings and Discussion

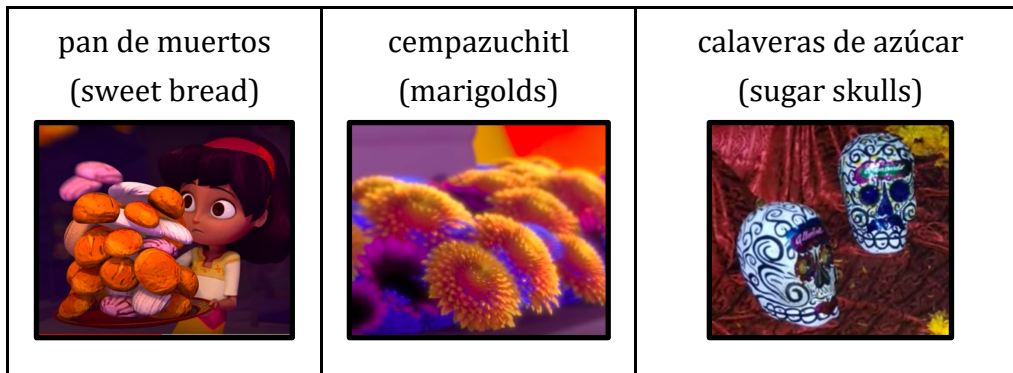
In what follows, we present our microethnographic analysis of a two-day writing sequence where Ms. Braun's 3rd grade EBs learned to compose calaveras. Although Ms. Braun did not follow the traditional patterns of writing calaveras with her EBs, the decisions she made to structure this mediated action provided students with an authentic purpose and audience for writing in Spanish.

Below we describe the multimodal literacy practices Ms. Braun incorporated as mediated acts to apprentice her EBs into writing calaveras, both incorporating traditional elements of the Writers' Workshop and adapting the model to mediate EBs' language development. Emphasis was given to the translanguaging and transmodal cultural tools emerged, which further mediated EBs' language development and writing. We also consider the extent to which particular cultural tools may have enhanced or hindered EBs writing processes, emphasizing students' agency to adopt—or not—Ms. Braun's intended cultural tools and mediated action.

Cempazutchil, Papel Picado, and Pan De Muertos: Developing Background Knowledge and Key Vocabulary

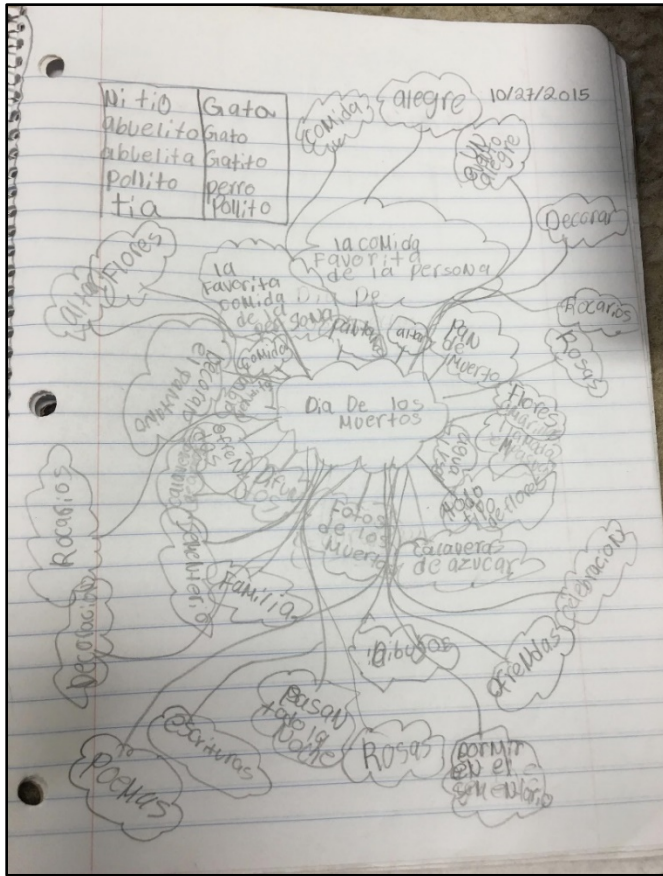
Ms. Braun mediated students' background knowledge and vocabulary development using multimodal cultural tools, a practice she employed often in instruction, to introduce them to the purpose and traditions of the Day of the Dead. She began by showing two videos, explaining how they would be learning more about this holiday, pointing and orally directing students to focus. In this social interaction (Erickson, 2004), Ms. Braun used linguistic and gestural means to direct students' attention to interact with these videos as cultural tools.

The first video (CG Bros, 2013), an award-winning animated 3D short film produced by the Ringling College of Art and Design, was wordless and accompanied by traditional instrumental music. The animated video opens with a sad little girl who is visiting her mother's tomb. The girl is magically drawn to the land of the dead, where she learns about the Day of the Dead. The audio and visual elements reduced the linguistic demands of the task. As students watched the story unfold, they learned the significance of the holiday, which is to honor those dear to our hearts who have passed away. The video introduced cultural elements and vocabulary (see Figure 1) associated with the holiday, such as traditional music, "cempazuchitl" (marigold) flowers, fruit, sweet Mexican bread, calaveras, piñatas, traditional dress, and dancing. The second video was an informational text that built upon the first video. It included real images of Day of the Dead celebrations in Latin American countries and provides descriptive narrative of the visual elements using Spanish voice over.

Figure 1*Day of the Dead Keywords (CG Bros, 2013)*

Ms. Braun's decision to open the writing sequence with these two videos successfully engaged students in the lesson. While students required explicit prompting to direct their attention to the projection screen, they were quickly engaged by the music, visuals and narration within the videos. Consistently, students' eyes were fixed on the screen and in some cases, they were observed laughing at the illustrations of dancing skeletons in the first video or the comedic narrator in the second. The images, narration and music made it possible for students to grasp key details from the video regardless of their language backgrounds.

While the videos did not explicitly discuss calaveras, they provided important background knowledge for the Day of the Dead. Consistent with her instruction throughout the year, Ms. Braun further mediated the development of students' background knowledge by integrating multiple cultural tools to explore what they learned from the videos: their writing notebooks, the document camera, a concept map, and whole class and small group discussion. Following the videos, she used her own writer's notebook and the document camera to model for students that they should also take out their own notebooks and open them to a new blank page. Ms. Braun purposefully restated the directions, holding and gesturing at her notebook to model the process again as she rotated to face the back of the room. When she noticed that one student did not yet have his notebook open, she provided explicit direction for him.

Figure 2*Student's Concept Map*

Once students were ready, Ms. Braun modeled the next step: drawing a concept map to recall details about the Day of the Dead (Figure 2). She asked students to write two or three details they learned from the videos, prompting them with a series of questions: “What are the components of Day of the Dead that you heard in the video? What did you observe? What does it consist of? What did you talk about? What did you see? Write it in your notebook.” She then elicited students’ contributions to add to her concept map as shown on the transcript below:

Ms. Braun: Ford, ¿Qué podemos poner alrededor de esto? (Referring to the projection of a Day of the Dead concept map from her notebook.)

[Ford, what can we write around this?]

Ford: Flores

[Flowers]

Ms. Braun: ¡Muy bien! Flores. Y tienen una flor en particular. O.K. Ahorita lo voy a escribir porque es muy difícil.

[Very good! Flowers. And they have a particular flower. O.K. Now I’m going to write it because it is very difficult.]

Ford: I forgot it, but it starts with a “c.”

Ms Braun: Cempazutchitl, cempazuchitl. (She repeats, as she writes on the concept map in her notebook.) Otro por favor, Andrea

[Marigold, marigold. Another please, Andrea.]

Andrea: Pan de muertos

[Day of the Dead bread]

Ms. Braun: Absolutamente, hay pan de muertos ¿Verdad? Es un pan de azúcar está muy rico. A mí me gusta mucho el pan de muertos. Dime Esmeralda...	[Absolutely, there is Day of the Dead bread. Right? It is a sugar bread that is delicious. I like Day of the Dead bread. Very much. Tell me Esmeralda.]
Esmeralda: Calaveras de azúcar	[Sugar skulls.]
Ms. Braun: Calaveras de azúcar. Absolutamente. ¿Qué más podemos agregar a nuestra lista? A ver, Violet.	[Sugar skulls. Absolutely. What else can we add to our list? Let's see, Violet.]
Violet: Fotografías.	[Photographs.]
Ms. Braun: (Directs question to all students) ¿De quién son las fotografías? Habla con tu grupo...¿De quién son las...?	[Whose are the photographs? Talk with your group, whose are the..?]
Greg: Fotografías de muertos.	[Photographs of the dead.]
Ms. Braun: Sí, de las personas que han muerto. O.K. So, Siempre son las personas que ya no están aquí con nosotros. O.K. Fotografías y voy a poner....de difuntos. (while writing on the concept map) Sería una buena palabra, ¿no? De los difuntos. Repite difuntos	[Yes, of the people that have died. O.K. So, they are always of the people that are no longer here with us. O.K. Photographs and I'm going to write.. of the deceased. It would be a good word, right? Of the deceased. Repeat, deceased.]
All students: Difuntos	[Deceased]
Ms. Braun: Difuntos	[Deceased]
All students: Difuntos	[Deceased]
Ms. Braun: Son los difuntos. Son las personas que ya han muerto y no están con nosotros. So, ésas son las fotografías que ponemos ahí.	[They are the deceased persons. They are the people that have died and are not with us. So, those are the photographs that we add there.]

As Ms. Braun collected students' responses on her concept map, she emphasized keywords (e.g. Figure 1) to mediate their background knowledge and vocabulary development. Ms. Braun used students' contributions to mediate the development of more advanced vocabulary. For instance, she prompted students to share what objects they noticed on the Day of the Dead altar in the video, explicitly teaching the terms "ofrendas" (offerings) and "la comida favorita" (favorite food); she asked students to repeat each term aloud several times before they wrote them in their notebooks. Likewise, students mediated vocabulary development for each other in their small groups, such as when Cheryl taught Jeffrey the term "esqueleto" for "skeleton." Through

integration of their writer's notebooks, the document camera, dialogue, and the concept map, students had the opportunity to hear, read, say, and write key vocabulary as they co-constructed background knowledge.

Another practice that Ms. Braun incorporated here and throughout the school year was the use of realia, a term used to refer to objects from everyday life, to mediate students' background and vocabulary knowledge. During their initial discussion of the Day of the Dead, Ms. Braun introduced the term "papel picado" (pecked paper), orally repeating and writing it on her concept map before asking students to repeat it. When she asked if anyone was familiar with the term, one student said yes and gestured to the colorful tissue paper hanging from the ceiling around the room (see Figure 3). Ms.

Braun then explained that papel picado has intricate patterns cut, or "pecked," into it and is often used to decorate altars for the deceased during Day of the Dead. Similarly, when the class returned to the writing task the next day, she reminded students of vocabulary words from the previous lesson, such as *cempazuchitl* and *calaveras de azúcar*. As Ms. Braun walked around, showing students the marigolds and sugar skulls, she brought, she asked them to repeat the words in Spanish (Figure 4). These realia provided students with cultural tools associated with the Day of the Dead to connect to their new background and vocabulary knowledge.

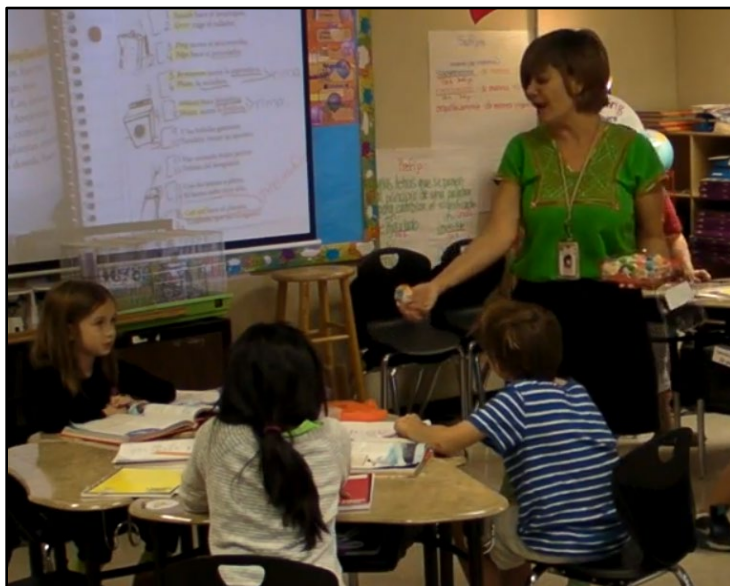
Figure 3

Papel Picado



Figure 4

Calaveras de Azúcar



After introducing the topic of the Day of the Dead, one of the Spanish-dominant students, Elio, shared that he would be celebrating the holiday to honor his recently deceased grandfather. Later, in their discussion of papel picado, Elio was reminded of the colored paper-like wafers that his aunt brought to his house. Ms. Braun then mentioned that it is also tradition to place "agua y sal" (water and salt) on the altar for los muertos. This

prompted Eric, another Spanish-dominant student, to mention that sometimes they use “agua bendita” (holy water), making another home-school connection to his personal experience. Ms. Braun then repeated *agua bendita*, adding it to the concept map and asking students to repeat after her. In both instances, Ms. Braun created space for Elio and Eric to share their home-school connections during whole class instruction, affirming the value of their experiential knowledge and culture.

Through integration of translanguaging and transmodal cultural tools, Ms. Braun established the context for students’ learning, building background and vocabulary knowledge associated with Day of the Dead. Establishing this context for writing provided an opportunity for students to express themselves with an authentic purpose and audience for composing *calaveras* and doing so in Spanish (Duran, 2017).

En Honor a los Difuntos: Translanguaging as Scaffolding

When Ms. Braun moved into more explicit writing instruction, she continued to integrate multiple cultural tools to provide systematic scaffolding throughout the writing workshop. She used her notebook and the document camera to model her writing process, directed students to follow along in their own notebooks, and facilitated whole class and small group discussion to provide support along the way. Unlike a traditional Writers’ Workshop model, where the teacher provides a short mini-lesson about a writing strategy for students to try during independent writing time, Ms. Braun strategically guided students through brainstorming and drafting of their *calaveras en honor a los difuntos* [honoring the dead]. As with other writing units, she modeled each step in her own notebook, prompting students to follow her model in their notebooks and rotating around the room to provide individualized support before moving onto the next phase.

Once the class had concluded their discussion of the cultural elements of Day of the Dead, Ms. Braun drew a square below her concept map and wrote a list of people who had passed away in her life. She then directed students to do the same. When she noticed that not all students were following her model, she momentarily stopped the whole class, and then clarified that they were to make a list of important people in their lives who were now deceased. She also clarified that they were no longer copying exactly what she had, as they had done with their concept maps, but instead that they would make their own lists.

All students developed their lists by the conclusion of the lesson on the first day, though not without a degree of resistance. The home-school connection Elio made with the lesson contributed to both his engagement and his resistance with writing *calaveras* as a mediated act. On the first day, he demonstrated great vulnerability when he shared that he would be celebrating the Day of the Dead in honor of his deceased grandfather. When the class brainstormed their lists, he began crying. When Ms. Braun noticed, she rotated to his table to hug and talk one-on-one with him. Building off this interaction, she addressed the whole class, again directing students to stop writing and listen carefully. She explained to the whole class that they would have the opportunity to write about the people on their list. Moments later, when she saw that Elio still had his hands over his face, Ms. Braun returned to his side to reassure him and asked if he would like to take a break. She said:

Ms. Braun: I'm sorry. A veces es difícil, verdad. ¿En quién estás pensando? (She moves closer to him to hear what he is saying. After, she addresses the whole class.) Pero mira. Yo creo que una cosa...una cosa muy pero muy importante del Día de los Muertos es que no es un día para estar triste. Es un día, es una celebración alegre. O.K. de la vida de esas personas. O.K. So, tenemos que tener esto, no como triste, pero como una cosa que podemos celebrar esa persona y estar felices de haberlos conocido, Elio. O.K. No te pongas triste. I'm sorry.

[I'm sorry. Sometimes it is difficult, right? Who are you thinking of? But look. I think a thing... a very, very important thing about the Day of the Dead is that it is not a day to be sad. It is a day, it is a happy celebration, O.K. of the life of that person, O.K. So, we have to have this, not sad, but as a thing that we can celebrate that person and be happy to have known them, Elio, ok. Don't be sad. I'm sorry.]

By the time Elio returned to the classroom, the class had transitioned to science. Ms. Braun allowed Elio to embrace his emotions and gave him the space to recover and continue with his academic work. This exemplifies socioemotional learning goals in the classroom. In recent years, the school districts in Texas have incorporated socioemotional learning goals to support student social and emotional safety. An unintended consequence of this lesson on how to manage emotions and resiliency was key as students remembered their relatives that have passed away.

At the start of the lesson on the second day, several students cheered when Ms. Braun explained that they would be returning to their exploration of the Day of the Dead and writing calaveras. She used her writer's notebook as a semiotic resource to communicate to students that they would be resuming their calaveras. She opened her notebook and displayed the concept map and list from the previous day under the document camera before directing students to open their notebooks, too. Reflective of her typical practice, Ms. Braun then rotated around the room, using proximity, gestures, and one-on-one interactions to ensure all students had their notebooks out and were ready to follow along. She returned to the projector to resume modeling, using oral language and gesturing with her finger to show that she was revisiting the list she had brainstormed the previous day.

Moving on from brainstorming to drafting, Ms. Braun used the left page of her notebook to show students how to write their calaveras. This allowed her and her students to see their concept maps and lists from the previous day while they wrote their poems. Ms. Braun began crafting her poem, composing a sentence frame ("Yo quiero celebrar a...I want to celebrate...") for students to copy into their notebooks before filling it out for her own poem about her "tia" (aunt) Dina.

After writing the first line, she repeated the sentence and walked around the room to monitor students' individual progress as they composed the first sentence in their own notebooks. She returned to the document camera, pointed to "tia Dina" to emphasize her use of capitalization, and rotated around the room once more to correct individual students' sentences as needed. Ms. Braun repeated this process for several

consecutive lines, constructing new sentence frames in the moment and using them to model for students how to continue writing their calaveras. Only after modeling the first few lines of the sentence did she move into independent writing time. Ms. Braun explained to students that once they had “seis oraciones buenas” (six good sentences), they could then write their calaveras on colored paper with the outline of a calaveras de azúcar that she had printed for students to compose their final drafts.

Throughout all stages of the writing process, Ms. Braun created space for her and her studies to leverage the rich linguistic and cultural resources they brought into the classroom. For instance, Ms. Braun employed translanguaging to explicitly develop students’ metalinguistic awareness. Likewise, during the second day of instruction, Ms. Braun provided an impromptu mini-lesson on the use of possessives after monitoring students’ writing. During this instance, she provided explicit instruction on how to use the possessive form, comparing the grammatical structure in English and Spanish registers.

“It’s creepy”: Día de Muertos and Literary Calaveras to Promote Critical Cultural Consciousness and Authentic Engagement

Translanguaging and transmodal practices in Ms. Braun’s classroom not only served as scaffolding tools, but also mediated and disrupted deficit cultural understandings (Cervantes-Soon, et al., 2017). Incorporating calaveras as a poetic genre allowed her to highlight an important cultural celebration in Latin American countries and foster cross-cultural understanding and the empowerment of students with diverse backgrounds. For example, as Ms. Braun drew her concept map and wrote “día de los muertos” in the middle of the page, Ms. Braun overheard Joshua say, “It’s creepy.” She responded to him, asking to explain why he felt that way. Joshua couldn’t answer and she encouraged him to stay on task. As she continued the lesson, she highlighted the importance of día de los muertos as a holiday during whole class instruction. Here Ms. Braun preparation as a critical bilingual teacher empowered a narrative where diverse cultural celebrations in Texas and beyond are centered and valued in the curriculum for student engagement.

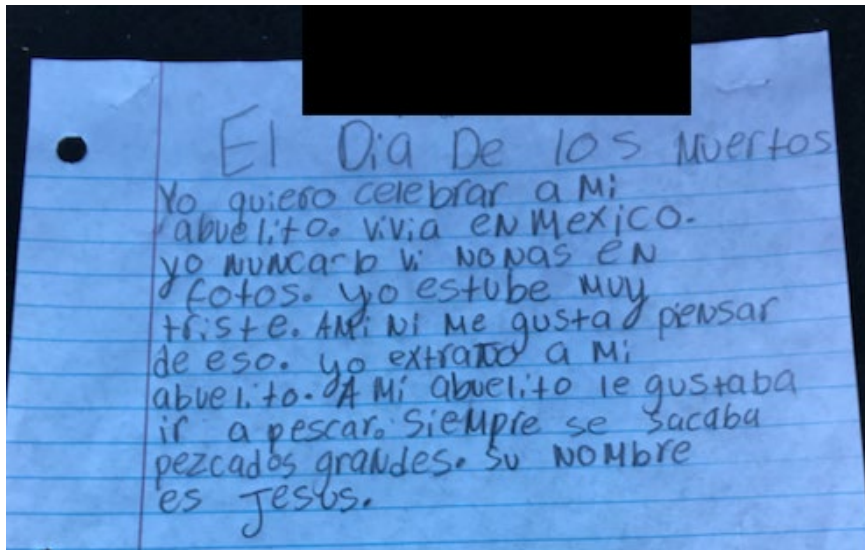
Ms. Braun also drew upon different linguistics registers for different functions to support students’ authentic engagement, allowing EBs to flexibly leverage their linguistic and cultural practices to participate in literacy events and practices (Christenson et al., 2012). For instance, Ms. Braun provided redirection in English as needed. When she noticed that students could not see the projection screen on the first day to watch the introductory videos, she provided directions in English for them to move their chairs. Likewise, when Ms. Braun noticed that both Abby and Jeffrey, English-dominant speakers, were disengaged during guided and independent writing, she used English to clarify directions, review her model, and offer encouragement, like “Let’s go!” and “That’s great!”

During independent writing time, Mrs. Braun’s students also accessed resources for themselves and each other, often through translanguaging. They independently used multiple cultural tools introduced by Ms. Braun to support their learning, from their notebooks and concept maps to her sentence frames and modeling. They also relied on the bilingual dictionaries stacked at their tables or their peers to mediate their own

learning. In some cases, students shared personal connections they had made with the curriculum to help each other make sense of what they were learning. For instance, after one of the Spanish-dominant students, Eric, had finished his calaveras on the second day, Ms. Braun directed him to help his small group with their own writing; he offered to help one of his group members, Alaina, who asked him how to say “missed” in Spanish. Though Eric was unsure, the two students discussed the term together. Making a home-school connection, Eric shared that he had not seen his father in a while, and with some teacher mediation, he used the word “extraño” to help Ashley express the feeling of missing someone who has been gone for a long time.

Figure 5

Eric's final draft



By the end of the two-day writing sequence all students had produced a literary calavera in an appropriate Spanish poetic register. (See Figure 5 for an example.) These calaveras showed all the different writing elements for this particular genre. As students learned how the difunto's favorite

food was placed in their altars during the Day of the Dead, students transferred this knowledge and included some of the favorite foods in the calaveras. Some students wrote about family members and others about their favorite pets. They wrote about the deceased individuals' favorite activities and why they enjoyed spending time together. In sum, Ms. Braun spent a significant amount of time establishing the context for writing calaveras through integration of cultural tools at the start of the writing sequence. Likewise, Ms. Braun leveraged students' cultural and linguistic resources to co-construct background and vocabulary knowledge and scaffold writing development. Next, we will discuss how translanguaging and transmodal practices can amplify the Writers' Workshop to mediate EBs' language development and writing processes.

Amplifying the Writers' Workshop Model for Emergent Bilinguals: A Discussion

Employing Burke's five pentadic terms within Wertsch's (1998) framework of mediated action in our analysis of literacy practices in a bilingual classroom allowed us to distinguish what instructional strategies, practices, and structures supported EBs' writing development as well as to see how they worked in tandem. Identifying Ms. Braun's mediated acts helped us to see how she expanded the traditional Writers' Workshop to apprentice EBs into writing calaveras. Given that she taught in a dual-

language classroom, Ms. Braun needed to invite students' linguistic and cultural resources across different registers and modes (Blommaert et al., 2018; García & Li, 2014); she also sought to expand what tools they had, so they could write calaveras.

First, in Ms. Braun's class, mediating background knowledge and vocabulary development went hand-in-hand to establish an authentic cultural context for composing calaveras. At the start of the writing sequence, she was purposeful about introducing students to the traditions associated with the Day of the Dead, such as decorating with papel picado and cempazuchitl and placing la comida favorita on the altar as ofrendas to the deceased. While these words were not necessarily going to become a part of the students' calaveras, discussing these practices expanded the EBs Spanish language repertoire and knowledge of the Day of the Dead as cultural, semiotic, and linguistic resources; they also created space for Spanish-dominant students, like Eric and Elio, to integrate their own experiences as cultural tools for learning. Furthermore, Ms. Braun situated this writing sequence as an opportunity for all EBs to remember and celebrate the life of someone important to them, from showing the wordless film of the young girl who visits her deceased mother in the land of the dead to adapting calaveras to honor the deceased rather than being political satire. Therefore, each student was able to draw upon their own experiences as cultural tools to develop their calaveras. Even when students, like Joshua, expressed resistance to learning about día de los muertos, Ms. Braun was purposeful about creating space for him to express his reaction to the holiday and later emphasizing why the holiday is an important cultural celebration.

Additionally, to support students' learning, Ms. Braun drew upon different cultural and linguistic tools, using translanguaging and transmodality to scaffold the learners' negotiation throughout the process of writing their calaveras. For example, Ms. Braun purposefully restated directions, holding and gesturing at her notebook to model the writing process. She incorporated various transmodal texts to support students' writing, from the two videos and realia to the concept map and brainstorming list. She also ensured that students' language comprehension and production were scaffolded through whole group instruction. She clarified that they were no longer copying exactly what she had, as they had done with their concept maps, but instead that they would make their own lists. Finally, intertextuality played a role in scaffolding translanguaging and transmodal literacy texts. While EBs produced their own work, Ms. Braun's modeling traveled through space and time, as her concept map and list supported individual students' unique production of concept maps and lists in their own notebooks. Likewise, EBs' own personal experiences traveled from home to school as they thoughtfully wrote about their deceased relatives.

Conclusion

Through integrating the tenets of mediation with biliteracy, multiliteracies, and translanguaging pedagogy, Ms. Braun offers a promising example of a culturally-sustaining (Paris, 2012) Writers' Workshop. As a case study the implications of our investigation illustrate how teachers might amplify the Writers' Workshop model to include opportunities for learners to develop background knowledge and key vocabulary for the *context* for writing as well as the actual writing process in addition to

more strategic language scaffolding throughout the writing workshop. As Ms. Braun's class illustrated, students can benefit from more bounded expectations for writing within a particular genre, extensive modeling by the teacher, and a structured approach to developing and organizing ideas for writing. In contrast with the Writers' Workshop model put forth by Calkins (1994) and Graves (1983), this suggests that it may be necessary to narrow students' opportunities for choice with respect to the genres, topics, and other decisions for writing *at first*. Accordingly, they could need extensive linguistic and cultural scaffolding in order to develop biliterate writing practices.

By including translanguaging and transmodal practices, Ms. Braun departs from an English-Only monolingual ideology (García & Li, 2014) and redistributes minoritized linguistic registers as cultural tools for learning. Furthermore, her writing instruction goes beyond traditional views of translanguaging as linguistic resources and includes multimodality (Blommaert et al., 2018) as a way for mediating students' writing processes. Together, these instructional practices promoted the voice and the identity of EBs as writers, where they added their own cultural, experiential, and emotional experiences to their *calaveras*.

Future lines of inquiry might consider how teachers draw upon biliteracy, multiliteracies and translanguaging frameworks to invite their students' existing knowledge and practices into the classroom as cultural tools for learning as well as to expand them through the introduction of new language and literacy practices. Likewise, we wonder how teachers might conceptualize the intertextuality of these cultural tools, considering alongside their students how their translanguaging and transmodal practices travel across time and space, thus disrupting the perceived boundaries between named languages (i.e., Spanish and English), linguistic and semiotic practices, and home and school contexts. Through incorporating the principles underlying both multiliteracies and translanguaging pedagogies, teachers can expand EB students' language and literacy practices while centering their resources and agency as growing bilingual and biliterate writers.

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End Notes

¹ We have chosen to employ Kissel's (2017) term, "Writers' Workshop" in place of "Writing Workshop" in order to center on the *writers* rather than their writing products.

² Term coined by García, O., Kleifgen, J. A., & Falchi, L. (2008). *From English language learners to emergent bilinguals*. A research initiative of the Campaign for Educational Equity. Equity Matters Research Review No. 1. Teachers College, Columbia University.

On the Road to Translanguaging in a Dual Language Classroom: Teaching Math and Science in Mandarin and English

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This article examines the evolving instructional practice of one Chinese dual language instructor in the US as she employs a translanguaging-inspired approach in her math and science Mandarin medium classes. Contrary to the school language allocation policy requiring 90% Mandarin in her Chinese classes, she encourages the utilization of English as well as Mandarin in her instruction. This offers comprehensible input to learners, also making possible greater student participation. Findings from observations and interviews reveal how a focus on meaning-making in instruction resulted in the gradual evolution of bilingual language use and effective communication of content by students and the teacher.

Keywords: Chinese, dual language immersion, pedagogy, scaffolding, translanguaging

“*Hěn hǎo* (很好, Very good), Jason,” Ms. Tang (all names are pseudonyms) said, while patting the student on his back, proud of the growth she had witnessed just in the past semester. “*Xiè xie, Lǎo shī*” (谢谢, 老师 thank you, teacher), the small African American boy uttered confidently as he snatched his homework back from his teacher. This student was in a Mandarin Chinese/English one-way developmental bilingual program characterized by Hancock County Elementary (HCE, pseudonym) as a “dual language immersion program,” in the suburbs of Atlanta. This program was initiated in 2013, five years before the study discussed here. (Unless otherwise noted, all mentions of “Chinese” in this article refer to Mandarin.)

Many models for delivering two languages in a bilingual program are possible, and controversy remains regarding the most effective approaches in particular settings (Baker & Wright, 2017; Ebsworth, 2009). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that there are cognitive, linguistic, and social issues involved in Chinese bilingual programs as they grow in prominence around the country. Even as interest in such programs has taken off in recent years, there are still unresolved issues that may jeopardize their success. In a traditionally monolingual context such as the United States, there is push-back by some against the usage of languages other than English in the instruction of

young children (Fu et al., 2019), and the program at HCE is reflective of these tensions. Nevertheless, a flexible bilingual approach allows students and teachers to draw on all their linguistic resources to convey meaning to each other (García & Li, 2014).

The current study considers the development of home language support at HCE by a teacher in two second-grade content-based Mandarin immersion classes in the program, one in math and another in science. The focus here is on the evolution of language use in the direction of first language support through translanguaging by a Chinese/English bilingual teacher and her students in a program where the language allocation policy was 90% Mandarin and 10% English in Chinese classes and 100% English in English-medium classes.

A consideration of the literature in the forthcoming section supports the positive benefits of bilingual education and the effectiveness of allowing students to make use of the languages they know as well as the target language to learn content while developing their additional language skills. Next, I present the methodology of the study. Findings and discussion sections follow and are combined. The last part of the article presents implications for teaching and further research.

Literature Review

Interest in China has taken root in the United States in recent decades reflecting its growth in economic prestige and global influence. Accordingly, the status of Mandarin, the Chinese language of wider communication, has similarly expanded (Ding & Saunders, 2006; Rapoza, 2019). Not only is Mandarin becoming a major second language option for secondary and college students, but this language is also represented as early as elementary levels (Sung & Tsai, 2019). Thus, recent educational efforts such as the program at HCE have focused on beginning early by immersing elementary-aged children in the Chinese language as part of their primary education. Specifically, elementary schools that teach Mandarin have become a growing trend around the nation, seeing a five-fold increase from 2006 to 2013 (Carstens, 2015). For example, Chicago has developed an innovative means of teaching Mandarin at 20 of its public schools (Chmelynski, 2006). To offset the lack of qualified instructors, these schools are hiring teachers from China to team-teach with U.S. teachers, where they plan and implement an integrated cross-curricular curriculum. However, although these teachers from China are native Mandarin speakers, they often have little or no training or experience in bilingual pedagogy, and instruction in the U.S. educational context is challenging for them (Wu, 2017).

In developing the bilingual model at HCE, alternative possibilities were considered. For example, administrators looked at the second language immersion approach. This modern bilingual language education model for instruction was pioneered in Canada where the nation has two official national languages, English and French (Wardle, 2009). Using a second language immersion approach, all the schooling in the initial years was delivered in the target language (French), sometimes progressing to a 50-50 French/English model by higher grades. The Canadian students were mostly English speakers in a French immersion school context. What resulted for these emergent bilingual learners was higher performance in both math and English than what had been achieved by their mainstream peers in all-English programs

(Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Also, as English-speaking students acquired French in the school setting, their English was maintained in the environment outside school since English was used at home and in the community where they resided. Another benefit of such schooling was greater cooperation between home French speakers and French learners, as the French and English-speaking communities were more socially engaged due to their shared bilingualism.

However, in adapting this model to a Mandarin-English bilingual program in the US, we need to consider that the social milieu is different than in Canada since the community and homes of the students attending the HCE school are largely monolingual. Thus, English is the dominant language in the school as well as outside school. In addition, it is important to note that in linguistic terms there are fewer opportunities for positive transfer between Mandarin and English oracy and literacy compared with French and English in the Canadian context. This reflects the different relationships between the languages, including the fact that Mandarin is a tone language and there are very few cognates between English and Mandarin as compared with French. Furthermore, written Mandarin uses either a traditional or simplified character-based writing system as opposed to an alphabetic one although alphabetic alternatives such as pinyin have been developed. The context for learning is also different as students in the HCE program considered here do not have easy access to native Mandarin speakers as compared with the target language speakers available to French learners in Canada.

Nevertheless, in electing to offer their bilingual program, HCE leadership is responding to the benefits of bilingualism and the advantages of starting early. Teaching a new language is particularly beneficial in the younger grades because of children's higher synaptic plasticity and brain capacity to acquire another language earlier in life (Li et al., 2014). Indeed, the academic benefits of bilingual education are apparent particularly when begun in the elementary grades, as learning an additional language correlates with increased performance in a range of disciplines (Stewart, 2005). This speaks to the concern of U.S. schoolboards and departments of education regarding the mathematical achievement of elementary students; bilingual program participants have shown markedly improved mathematics scores (Lindholm-Leary, 2012) and higher achievement in science as well (Garza-Reyna, 2019). These researchers point to other benefits, include more developed cognitive skills, higher achievement in all academic areas as noted above, and higher standardized test scores over time. This last benefit may be especially appealing for schools and administrations, which are often evaluated based on their students' performance on such exams. An important caveat has been suggested, however, as in a study of bilinguals' reading and mathematics skills (Berch et al., 2018), participants stressed the importance of understanding the language in which mathematics is presented to learn effectively.

Additional advantages of bilingual education programs are consistently reported (Thomas & Collier, 2003), and suggest that both English speakers and speakers of other home languages have been found to gain in creative thinking and insight (Kharkhurin, 2018). Developmental bilingual curricula in the United States are designed to add a language to students' knowledge and/or maintain and continue optimum development of the students' home language while engaging in and learning from a curriculum in

English (García & Baker, 2007). These programs are ideally designed in a rigorous fashion, with a minimum of six years of bilingual instruction, a focus on the core curriculum, and high-quality language arts programs in both languages. In the upper grades, continued instruction of the target language supports an additive bilingual environment with well-prepared bilingual personnel and an active parent-school partnership (Baker & Wright, 2017). This dual language pedagogical approach has the potential to meet the needs of all students, English native speakers, and those learning English as an additional language, in both their academic and linguistic development.

Students who learn another language also gain in self-esteem and improved self-concept as proficient bilinguals (Lindholm-Leary, 2016). In a study of Mandarin-English and Spanish-English bilingual language programs, 788 students from 5th to 8th grades were assessed, self-rated, and interviewed pertaining to their second language proficiency. These emergent bilingual students were deemed proficient in their second language by test scores, rated their second language as proficient, and enjoyed participating in the program. They also held positive attitudes towards speakers of the target language, as well as its associated culture, appreciating the cognitive and social benefits of dual language programs. The positive associations between language and culture have been widely acknowledged, as the two are intimately connected (DeNisco, 2015). Thus, bilingual language instruction also has the potential to impart cultural awareness to students.

Importantly, the concern that reduced exposure to a target language which results from incorporating two languages in curricula could result in negative learning outcomes is misplaced. Chavez (2016) found that there was no correlation between increased usage of students' home language and decreased usage of the additional target language. In her study of three instructors in a German-as-a-second language classroom in a midwestern U.S. city, the researcher reported varying degrees of English usage in teacher and student utterances. What she found more predictive of target language speaking frequency was the use of peer collaborative tasks, where students interacted authentically with each other in thinking through a question or a problem, and activities such as whole-class peer talk. Thus, the notion that "L1 use reduces L2 use in direct proportion found no support in the data" (p. 155). Indeed, in studies of bilingual and second language classrooms, utilization of students' home language has been found to be an asset to content acquisition and peer communication. Additional evidence comes from a study in which specific classroom activities, such as board games like *Mystery Forest*, have been utilized to teach Chinese to English speakers in bilingual programs (Poole et al., 2019). While the games in the study were often in English, the researchers report that student engagements and unsolicited comments were often in Chinese. Incorporating such highly interactive games mainly in their home language, with expressions in the target language could be motivational in nurturing proficiency in the target language, as well as developing student interest for learning that language.

Given that ultimate achievement of bilingualism is an asset, some have argued that immersion programs must only use the target language for instruction and communication (Fortune & Jorstad, 1996). However, in a review of recent studies I found a validation for the use of both languages, rather than only the target language,

even in an immersion classroom. In terms of language immersion classrooms in general, past research has advocated the use of students' home language to help them acquire their additional language, which means that in practice, "immersion" would not necessarily be limited to the additional language input only, as the term might suggest (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). In their study, these researchers investigated a dual language elementary classroom in north Texas, where native Spanish speakers and native English speakers were grouped together; each helped the other with acquisition of their respective additional language. "These bilingual pairs collaborate[ed] and create[ed] meaning together" (p. 109), as they flexibly utilized their home language to assist others and themselves in facilitating both content and language learning. Elsewhere in such programs, students collaboratively created bilingual word walls to abet recognition of the target language for classmates in the dual language classroom (Espinosa & Ascenzi-Moreno, 2021). The idea of validating the use of both languages in immersion programs was promoted over twenty years ago by Cummins (1998) when he alerted us that not all contexts are equally conducive to a full immersion approach. He identified three immersion models that were operational in Canada over a period of years. These were early immersion, middle immersion, and late immersion. However, regardless of the model, the home language played an important educational role over time. In addition, the home language of the students was always used outside school. The criteria of immersion programs that Cummins proposes highlight the importance of meaning enhancement through making input comprehensible. To achieve this, the students' stronger language must play a role in their immersion experience.

A more recent example of the importance of using both languages to learn in immersion programs is found in a study conducted by Swain & Lapkin (2013). In their review of language allocation decisions in one or two-way immersion classrooms, the scholars focus on teachers' perspectives and practices based on those decisions. They identify a broad range of opinions from the extremes of exclusive target language use or great reliance on the home language to more nuanced practices incorporating both languages. Taking a socio-cultural view of language acquisition, they consider not only the need to convey information via language but also how language itself can frame ideas. They reveal the mediating effect of "collaborative dialogue" (p. 106) in developing ideas that are conveyed through language. Using these lenses, they highlight how access to students' stronger languages can help them to understand content and convey the meaning they intend in the target language. The researchers conclude that the integration of both languages in the learning process can be advantageous.

Indeed, in Cummins' (2007) study, he argued against the rigid separation of the languages in instruction, referring to home language as L1 and additional language as L2. He made the case for the use of students' more proficient language in the service of content acquisition. One meaningful learning activity suggested by Cummins involved utilizing the L1 by reading and telling stories in students' L1 and translating them into the L2. Students of the same language background could be grouped together so those who were more proficient in the L2 could assist those who needed help. Students were also encouraged to use bilingual dictionaries and have access to books in their L1. In addition, family members were engaged as a resource for students' L1 development. For example, for one student from the greater Toronto area whose L1 was Urdu,

Cummins found that when linguistic flexibility was employed, “[h]er home language, in which all her prior experience prior to immigration were encoded, became once again a tool for learning” (p. 235). As research and practice continue to develop, strict language separation has become more and more contested (García & Lin, 2017; Wiley, 2019).

Particularly in the context of dual language immersion classrooms, the integration of languages is favored. In these heteroglossic contexts, students’ diverse ways of languaging, learning, and showcasing this learning are all valued. Contemporary scholarly literature recognizes the importance of using the rich, complex, and multifaceted linguistic repertoire of students as a strategic tool in instruction to support the learning of both content and language. This view serves as a foundation for the construct of translanguaging. As discussed by Sánchez et al. (2018), this construct acknowledges that students exposed to more than one language “develop a unitary linguistic competence; that is, the two languages of a bilingual are not separate linguistic systems but manifestations of acts of deployment and suppression of linguistic features (words, sounds, rules) that society assigns to one or another language” (p. 38, parenthetical in original).

In this review of the literature, we have seen that various bilingual models have adopted alternative language allocation policies with varying results depending on linguistic, sociocultural, and contextual factors. Furthermore, following earlier work on first language support (Auerbach, 1993; Cummins, 1979; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976; Wells, 1999; Williams, 1996), translanguaging was introduced as a key construct that illustrates how the dynamic integration of languages in instruction serves to facilitate learning of content and acquisition of language. As part of an open language policy where all languages are potentially valid communication tools (Shohamy, 2007) it allows learners and teachers to make content comprehensible and meaningful. To deepen the exploration of how the integration of languages in instruction opens different paths to learning, the following section discusses translanguaging as a theoretical and pedagogical construct.

Translanguaging: Theoretical Constructs and Connections to Pedagogy

Translanguaging is conceptualized as a fluid organic integration of languages that maximizes expressivity (García et al., 2016; García & Li, 2014). In the present sense, translanguaging “considers the practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has traditionally been the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages” (García & Li, 2014, p. 2). In this paradigm shift from traditional notions of multilingual education, languages are utilized with each other to transmit meaning. This practice most aptly refers to “the simultaneous process of continuous becoming of ourselves and our language practices, as we interact and make meaning in the world” (p. 8).

Gen Williams (2000) coined the Welsh term, ‘trawsieithu’ in the 1980’s, translated as ‘translanguaging’ (Lewis et al., 2012). Poza (2017) reviewed the use of this construct over time, and demonstrated its range of usage in the field, adding “a set of teaching practices,” which incorporate the fluid use of two languages to make meaning, but also identified its connection to language teaching and learning through the lens of

critical pedagogy, an aspect that is inconsistently present (Canagarajah, 2011). The advantages to the use of translanguaging, which promote learners' employment of all their language resources in making meaning, continue to be reported and advocated (García & Otheguy, 2020).

We can see that as the overlapping fields of language learning and bilingual education have developed, the access to one's native tongue to help make meaning while acquiring an additional language or developing both languages have been a consistent refrain (Lin, 2013). Whether in a foreign language setting (where the use of the L2 is essentially classroom-based) or in a second language setting (where the L2 is the language of the community or country in which the class resides), evidence has accumulated that promoting the use of students' total sociolinguistic resources to make meaning is advantageous. And further, this practice is a normal part of social communication in bilingual communities all over the world (Poza, 2017). In a dual language context, enacting a "translanguaging language allocation policy that would enable teachers to legitimately provide students with translanguaging affordances would empower all students to meaningfully participate in classroom instruction, regardless of their types of language performances and learning abilities" (Sánchez et al., 2018, p. 43).

This notion "connotes one linguistic system that has features most often practiced according to societally constructed and controlled 'languages,' but other times producing new practices" (p.14). For instance, a translanguaging reframe can bridge the divide between conceptual growth and language learning by privileging communication and understanding as bilingualism and biliteracy develop in learners (Fu et al., 2019). In this way, learning can be a heteroglossic endeavor (Bakhtin, 1981), so "that the various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various 'social languages' come into contact with one another" (p. 282). Other instructional practices that promote a dialogue between languages include translation (Baynham & Lee, 2019), code-switching (oral language), and code-meshing (written language) (Canagarajah, 2010; Grosjean & Miller, 1994).

Relevant to the investigation discussed in this article is the practice of translation. While translanguaging itself is both philosophically and practically more complex and multidimensional, the strategic and targeted use of translation has been identified as of potential use in settings where a translanguaging approach is welcome. When used in a dynamic way, where the focus is to draw on two languages creatively to ensure that meaning is conveyed successfully in a bilingual classroom setting, a teacher or interlocutor may use translation into the learner's dominant language to explain or paraphrase what is said in the less familiar language when it is not understood. The construct of translanguaging can overlap with the practice of translation, as Baynham and Lee (2019) elaborate, "translanguaging can be a way of understanding the moment-to-moment deployment of the multilingual repertoire in the activity of translating" (p. 34).

To summarize, in this study, translanguaging is framed as granting children their full repertoire of linguistic features to maximize their communication. So, as a practice, in the field of bilingual education, "*translanguaging* [has] helped students make

meaning and gain understanding and knowledge” (García & Lin, 2017, p. 3, parenthetical added), thereby supporting content acquisition through scaffolding learning upon established understanding. Learning becomes personalized and authentic, encouraging students’ utilization of their home language as they make connections to prior knowledge and experiences, most likely also processed and stored in that language, registering new content into meaningful and intimate know-how (Cummins, 2007). With a focus on meaning drawing on all linguistic resources, learners can more successfully process both content-based and second language expression which becomes comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982, 2014). As explained by Krashen and Terrel (1995), “language acquisition only takes place when a message which is being transmitted is understood” (p. 55).

In essence, by implementing translanguaging pedagogy, the child’s language learning becomes a more natural communicative endeavor rife with meaning and relevance. However, to incorporate translanguaging may require a reconsideration of a school community’s assumptions regarding multilingualism and pedagogy (Menken & García, 2020). This issue is the focus of my investigation, described in the section that follows.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies and student engagements within a classroom in which the teacher privileges the exchange of meaningful information through a translanguaging-inspired approach for math and science instruction in a second grade Mandarin/English bilingual setting?
2. What are the social dynamics and academic processes of using a translanguaging-inspired approach for both the instructor and the students?

Method

This case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), part of a larger research endeavor, focuses on one Chinese-born early grades elementary teacher implementing an approach that focused on meaningful exchanges in teaching mathematics and science in a second grade Mandarin-English bilingual program. Given the problematic school-based 90% immersion policy in Mandarin classes, it was important to offer thick and rich data documenting the efforts of a teacher prepared to take an alternative route in language allocation to facilitate acquisition of both language and content.

Context

As noted above, the present study was conducted in a second grade of a Mandarin Chinese/English one-way developmental bilingual program at HCE. The bilingual program had been initiated by the school’s principal, Dr. Jones, who has a Doctor of Philosophy in Education. She felt motivated to do so after attending a seminar regarding Chinese immersion classrooms, after which she traveled to China for a summer to observe Chinese elementary classrooms in schools in Shanghai. She was eager to bring such cultural and linguistic contextual learning and the benefits of bilingual education to her students in the United States.

In what began as a pedagogical experiment, the school hired six Chinese instructors, some Chinese American and some directly from China, to teach the Chinese

curriculum. The initiative represented the first Chinese/English bilingual program in the area, and parents of students in the program were eager to expose their children to this type of innovative instruction. Going from kindergarten through fifth grade, students are taught some subjects bilingually in Mandarin and English and others solely in English, as noted above. Importantly, the administration expected instructors of Mandarin language classes to teach in the target language of Mandarin Chinese 90% of the time with 10% allocated to first language support in English.

The students in the program came to Ms. Tang's classroom for math and science in Chinese for half the day and then went to her mainstream counterpart for English language arts (ELA) and social studies in English for the other half. The grade was divided into two sections, and her two classes switched before lunch.

Ms. Tang's class consisted of 48 students in total. Her mainstream colleague had altogether 55 students in total, and the other dual language class had 37 students. All students had comparable socioeconomic, racial, and gender distribution. There was no academic requirement for the bilingual classroom, only parental willingness. This could have meant that these families were more invested in their children's education and had been more eager to support their learning. I am aware that this possible selection bias may have been a confounding factor in my study. There were no separate math or science tracks, nor was a gifted program available. Nevertheless, based on a comparison of prior year test scores and familial, linguistic, socioeconomic, and racial/cultural distributions of students in these classes (this data was offered by the principal), students in all classes were deemed to be evenly distributed in terms of academic and cultural backgrounds.

Participants

The participants in this study were the teacher, Ms. Tang, and 13 students, whose parents signed the consent form, from the science and math classes she taught. Ms. Tang was 28 years old at the start of this study. She had spent the majority of her life in China but moved as an adult to the United States with her Chinese American husband. She received her master's degree in the Curriculum and Instruction department of the College of Education in a major university in the southeastern United States and had been teaching full-time at Hancock County Elementary for four years when I conducted the study in 2018. As part of her degree program, she had completed a year-long internship at a local southeastern U.S. public elementary school, where she learned more about the culture and behaviors of young students in the United States as well as the larger U.S. cultural context, exploring effective pedagogy for meeting their learning needs. When she began her career, she started by teaching a mainstream class during her first year and transitioned to the dual-language program a year later; she was deemed an exemplary instructor by her principal. The reason I chose her classroom as my primary focus was because data from the school reported in summative evaluation highlights distinguished Ms. Tang's class from those of her peers at the school.

Ms. Tang taught two classes: the math class had 23 students (12 girls and 11 boys), and the science class had 25 students (15 girls and 10 boys), totaling 48 students. In the math class, the students were mostly native English speakers, with one Hispanic

girl (from a Spanish-speaking family) and one biracial (Caucasian and African American) boy. The science class consisted of mostly native English speakers except for one East Indian girl (who also spoke Hindi) and one boy of Chinese descent. (The Chinese American boy was dominant in English, but Fujianese, a Chinese variety not mutually intelligible with Mandarin, was spoken by his family; he was culturally Chinese to some degree). All the students with alternative home languages were English-dominant at the time of the study. Family occupations ranged from technicians and mechanics to local restaurant owners and employees of major companies in Atlanta. Both classes took place in the same classroom with students changing rooms at the end of each period.

The thirteen students in this study were in second grade but had been in the program for two years prior to Ms. Tang's class. In essence, they had a basic understanding of Chinese, were able to understand simple directions, like *zuòhǎo* (坐好, take your seat) and *búyào jiǎnghuà* (不要讲话, no talking). In kindergarten and first grade, children had worked on comprehension of simple Chinese directives, learning how to read and write numbers up to one hundred, and to speak commonly used words and phrases, such as *shū* (书) for "book" and *wǒ xǐhuān zhège* (我喜欢这个) for "I like this," as well as how to ask questions in Chinese with *wèishénme* (为什么) for "why," *shénme* (什么) for "what," and *zěnmehuì* (怎么会) for "how come," which they learned in prior grades. They could also copy Chinese script from the board, and could write basic math terms in Chinese, such as "*jiā* (加, add)," "*jiǎn* (减, subtract)," "*děngyú* (等于, equals)" and "*zǒnggòng* (总共, in total)."

Researcher Positionality

I am a thirty-nine-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen from Nanjing, China. I came to the United States when I had just turned seven, and since second grade, had all my schooling in the United States. While in this country, I rebelled against learning Chinese, and consequently, never maintained my Chinese literacy.

Having been educated for most of my life in the United States, I returned to China as an adult to teach English for three years after receiving my master's degree in Counselor Education. There I learned more about my heritage culture and language. While I am now proficient in speaking Mandarin, I have only very rudimentary Chinese reading and writing ability and so have had to member-check all my translations of Chinese data with Ms. Tang. Throughout the course of this research, I have been intentional in not allowing my personal experiences of and feelings towards learning Chinese influence my analyses of the data.

Data Collection

As the researcher, I worked in tandem with both the classroom instructor and school personnel to implement this study. Data for this study was collected through observations of instruction and interviews of participants as well as a review of student work in the fall of 2018. A conversation with the principal further illuminated the findings. I conducted observations of Ms. Tang's instruction in the second-grade classroom of the Dual Language Immersion program a total of 36 times for an entire day each time. In particular, I looked at the discourse of the classroom, the languages

utilized in instruction, types of interactions between the teacher and students, the students with each other, as well as the students' engagement with the learning materials. I was also able to observe two other dual language classrooms (Ms. Chen and Ms. Zhang) four times each but did not collect any other data, such as student work or interviews, in those settings. My interest was to compare the practices observed in these two classrooms with Ms. Tang's classroom to identify any patterns of similarities and differences in terms of instruction and communication. Observations were documented through notes of student interactions and writing down specific speech verbatim as I heard it. Observations also occurred on the playground at recess a total of five times.

Additionally, to enrich my understanding and appreciation of the context, I took photographs of classroom arrangements and student work. Lastly, to study written production for translanguaging, I collected writing samples from the students, most of which were assigned and written in simplified Chinese script concerning answers to math or science questions. Ms. Tang shared her students' homework, classwork, and projects digitally with me. In her instruction, she never used *pīnyīn* directly in her teaching although expressions with *pīnyīn* did appear on the walls of the class. Rather, Ms. Tang only pronounced the words and wrote the simplified characters for students. These artifacts documented the students' and teacher's productive use of both languages over time.

I interviewed Ms. Tang a total of six times. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately an hour. These conversations addressed her instructional practices, the cultural activities, and manifestations of her students, as well as those of herself (Leech, 2002). The principal and parents of students were also interviewed. Audacity software on my laptop was used to audio-record all interviews. I was in the classroom two days each school-week for the entire semester. Another resource for my findings included my observation notes which served to document teacher instruction and student action/interactions. This provided a rich and thick resource which was additive in informing my understanding of how teaching and learning across languages took place.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed via Express Scribe software, and then I coded the transcripts using ATLAS.ti. Emerging themes were identified through a recursive process including U.S. culture, Chinese culture, Chinese language, English language, and digital literacy. The data was initially coded via preset categories of ethnicity, gender, age, Chinese, English, translanguaging (operationalized as the concurrence of both languages in one utterance, writing sample, or reading of text), and types of behavior (e.g., groupwork, one-on-one, independent). There was recursive thematic analysis of writing, speech, and behaviors of students and the instructor (Landauer et al., 1998).

The analysis connected the data to either cultural or linguistic classifications as more Chinese or more US-leaning. For example, when speaking about Chinese language or cultural artifacts, such as orally discussing or writing in simplified script about the Mid-Autumn festival, I coded this as pertaining to Chinese associations. When discussing or writing about U.S.-based issues, like the unit on George Washington Carver for the science unit on the life cycle of peanuts, I coded this as more U.S.

associated. There was a third categorization, which was a hybrid of both cultures, when Chinese artifacts were discussed in English in connection to the students' own experiences and when U.S. artifacts were discussed in Chinese or in the vein of Chinese culture. This hybrid classification was particularly indicated by translanguaging in speech and writing (García & Li, 2014). The codes were mapped on a spreadsheet and the instances for each manifestation were recorded.

Triangulation of data sources included a comparison of the observations, interview data, and student work (Flick, 2004) to identify consistent themes. I analyzed codes from both interviews and observations and then compared them with the student products. For example, "translanguaging" was one major theme that appeared in all three data types. In my analysis of each translanguaging event, I documented the event in rich detail. For instance, I took note of the nature of the communication (e.g., oral, written), content of communication (e.g., math, science) the nature of work (seatwork, collaboration), and the number of students involved. I also noted the demeanor and eagerness of students, their levels of participation indicated by their mannerisms, speech frequency and volume. In the interview, I highlighted words that described translanguaging and noted the corresponding speech around this term. I member-checked interviews and class observations with Ms. Tang after my transcriptions and field-notes. Translanguaging was coded when students were utilizing their entire linguistic repertoire, with English as their dominant language and Mandarin as their additional language, to convey their intended meaning. The next section reveals the multiple dimensions in which translanguaging evolved in the focus classroom.

Findings and Discussion

When I visited Ms. Tang's classroom, I found that the dominant language makeup of Ms. Tang's class consisted of English native or English-dominant speakers, with just a few speakers of home languages other than English. In her classroom I saw vibrant graphic organizers adorning the walls with common Chinese expressions written both in Chinese and *pīnyīn*. Also visible was an agenda for the day on the whiteboard, as well as names of all the students positioned on a behavior chart with corresponding faces (smile=good, no smile=caution, frown=parent contact). There was a treasure box in the front of the room, where the students could trade in their tickets, or what they called *miàn miàn*, for prizes at the end of the week. Tickets were given for commendable behaviors and exemplary schoolwork. There were different graphic organizers of writing conventions and math facts written in both English and simplified Chinese script. There was a map of China and a world map in the front of the room, with desks arranged in six clusters of five with a multicolored oval rug towards the whiteboard at the front. The teacher's desk was in the back end of the front side under a large window to the outside, where she was able to observe all students. As a teacher in the public-school system in Georgia, Ms. Tang was required to follow the Georgia State Standards as mandated by the schoolboard, whose mastery was assessed by end-of-the-year high-stakes examinations.

When observing, I recorded instances of student interactions and conversations with each other almost entirely in English. Students engaged with the instructor mostly in English, while phrases like, "Can I go to the bathroom [我能去洗手间吗 (wǒ néngqù

xǐshǒujiān ma]],” were spoken in Chinese, having been explicitly taught beforehand. During my entire observation period, 92% of student interactions were in English and 8% were in Chinese or a form of Chinese interlanguage.

As part of my larger study of Mandarin classrooms in the school, I was able to observe the other Mandarin math and science classrooms in the same grade led by another instructor, Ms. Chen. Here I describe her classroom to offer a background of what was more commonly observed in bilingual classes other than Ms. Tang’s. Ms. Chen’s class was similar in makeup to that of Ms. Tang in that all students were English natives or English dominant with a similar gender ratio. Ms. Chen’s teaching style consisted of mostly lecturing in front of the classroom the entire time, and the students were not responsive in terms of speech or behavior. Students in that class talked to each other in English about unrelated issues, used their cellphones, and often failed to respond to the teacher’s questions about the course content. There were also instances of evident student and instructor frustration in terms of inability to communicate clearly with each other. There were occasions of student outbursts and the teacher sighing. Ms. Chen, as a newly arrived Chinese teacher, even told me, “In China, students are afraid of the teacher. Here, they’re so wild!” The instructional climate this instructor cultivated did not suggest an interactive instructional style, perhaps reflecting her unfamiliarity with the cultures and school expectations of U.S. students (Wu, 2017).

By comparison, my observation in Ms. Tang’s classroom revealed an instructional style that was interactive with a flexible language use which developed over time. Ms. Tang confirmed that she did not initiate her instruction at the beginning of the semester with any specific plan for translanguaging. In fact, she started following a model in which most teaching was done in Mandarin as official school policy mandated, and as I observed in the other bilingual classrooms. However, when she found that students were becoming frustrated and effective communication could not occur, she shifted her language allocation to incorporate a more fluid model that favored English when needed for comprehension but included Mandarin when it could be used in a meaningful way. Other research has suggested that even seasoned teachers in bilingual programs have struggled, as Ms. Tang’s has, with the 90% target language rules and have had to rely on gestures and pictures to help students learn and retain new concepts (Clydesdale, 2019).

In her interviews, Ms. Tang explained that her decision to allow for more flexible language use in class was also informed by her previous teaching experience. In her first year, she also originally stuck to the 90% target language rule that was the official policy. According to her, this proved to be ineffective, as her English dominant students were often confused and could not learn any of the new math and science concepts introduced, such as odd and even numbers and the water cycle, when these were introduced nearly solely in Mandarin Chinese. Even as Ms. Tang utilized the assistance of graphic aids and gestures, her students did not respond much in class, nor did they work consistently on the assignments or assessments. So, gradually, Ms. Tang arrived at the decision that she would intentionally utilize English as well as Mandarin to support comprehension in her instruction and encourage students’ responses, both oral and written, in English to whet their appetite for the disciplines and build a meaningful foundation of language and content. This, she explained, was her frame of mind at the

beginning of the semester that I observed. Gradually and strategically over time, she increased the input of Mandarin, as students internalized more of the basic math and science content, like odd and even numbers and the states of matter.

Anecdotal information suggested other influences in her decision to continue using Mandarin gradually and strategically in her classroom. For instance, the principal reported that Ms. Tang's students performed better than those in the other class on formal evaluations (personal communication). Also noticeable from observations, during math and science lessons, was increased student attention to the teacher, appropriate responses to her questions, and consistent focus on the tasks she assigned. A positive change in the children's enthusiasm in learning content was noted in parental reports. One parent even told Ms. Tang, "My child used to hate math, but now he can't stop talking about it!"

Science

To describe instruction early in the academic year, Ms. Tang commented, "Science instruction involves a lot of specific new vocabulary, so, I use mostly English with English reading materials so the students could catch the meaning first. Then, I introduce certain Chinese terms relevant to the material." To exemplify, the Science class focused on S2P1 (Georgia State Standards, 2016): Obtain, evaluate, and communicate about properties of matter and changes that occur in objects. To teach this standard using Chinese, Ms. Tang knew she had to first instantiate the concepts deeply using mostly English (her students' home language or dominant language) while teaching select keywords in both English and Chinese. Once they learned the keywords, she utilized only Chinese in referencing those terms but continued to use English in her descriptions and explanations of content. For instance, she taught the words for the states of matter in English and Chinese, like *liquid*, 液体 (*yè tǐ*), *solid*, 固体 (*gù tǐ*), and *gas*, 气体 (*qì tǐ*). She would begin with utilizing both the English with the Chinese, having the children practice the Chinese pronunciations the initial week. As the second week began, she gradually used only the Chinese for these terms. In addition to orally communicating this terminology, she would also write the Chinese characters, having the students copy them in their own work. She did not take points off for handwriting, although some of the students' work was difficult to decipher. The students had never been encouraged to codemesh in their writing (Canagarajah, 2010) by their Mandarin teachers in previous grades.

Early in the semester, to demonstrate the thermodynamics of matter, Ms. Tang had some students standing still holding hands to mimic solids, others holding hands moving around slowly for liquids, and a small group running around individually for gas. During this mini-lesson, students conversed in English about how far apart they should be and how fast they should move. After this activity, students used expressions like, "That was cool!" "Being molecules is fun!" and "I kind of understand now." So, as was evident, student interactions were generally in English during these tasks. During these times, students engaged freely and thus reverted mostly to their home language for communication and processing new learning.

Another example of instruction early in the school year is the creation of book clubs in science. During this activity, students were encouraged to independently

discover different topics. Pairs of students selected and checked out books in English, which each student independently read and discussed with their partners. Books chosen by the students were mostly nonfiction texts about certain science phenomena, such as the states of matter or the life cycle of frogs, with some fiction, for example, *The Magic School Bus* series. The students shared what they learned using mostly English, with additional instruction from Ms. Tang regarding the various topics. Mandarin was used to identify familiar terms that the class had been practicing in the target language, like the states of matter, but this usage was not required.

In a typical sentence early in the unit, she would say, “With heat, ice will 融化 [róng huà] or melt into water,” and “With even more heat, water will 蒸发 [zhēng fā] or evaporate to water vapor.” She would go on, “When it is cold, water vapor 凝结 [níng jié] or condense into water,” and “When it gets even colder, water 冻结 [dòng jié] or freezes to ice.” So, even though she was able to utilize and instruct the Chinese terminology, most of the sentence was in English to teach the children the concepts. When she did use Chinese, she was sure to utter the English translation right afterwards to reinforce the idea. Her speech demonstrated that communication in her class could intermingle both languages in their conveyance of ideas.

Also noted early in my observations was that students’ usage of Chinese consisted mostly of repetitions of phrases previously learned, like 为什么 [wèishénme] for why, and 变成 [biànchéng] for change, along with their own choice for describing matter (Chinese for several specific types of matter had been taught, e.g. 铁 [tiě] (iron) and 水 [shuǐ] (water)). As mentioned earlier, Ms. Tang’s utterances were most often in English for novel material or deeper explanations, such as the above regarding the thermodynamics of molecules. In this way, common Chinese phrases could be strengthened, and deeper or more nuanced statements could be offered in English, so students were able to comprehend these concepts more fully.

As of the second month, it was evident that students really understood the Chinese terms and even began to use them without teacher support in their comments and questions in class. Gradually, the teacher would insert more Chinese when teaching science. For example, in her lesson on the states of matter, after students had learned the matter transitions of 融化, 蒸发, 凝结, and 冻结, Ms. Tang would change the matter type, to say oxygen or iron, and teach children that with enough heat, any matter can shift between the three states of 气体, 液体 and 固体, thereby reinforcing the Chinese for the states of matter as well.

As the semester continued to progress, instances of rich codeswitching, as a translanguaging practice, were observed. Over time, students inserted more Chinese into their interaction during lessons without being prompted by the teacher. For example, there were several instances of student questioning, such as “为什么水会变成冰啊? [wèishénme shuǐhuì biànchéng bīng a?] (Why does water change into ice?)” and “What do the molecules look like in a marker?” Thus, the language of these questions was free to vary between Chinese and English. Sometimes, the questions themselves were also translanguaged, e.g., “Can rocks 蒸发 [zhēng fā] (evaporate) too?” Ms. Tang’s responses were also a mixture of English and Chinese, such as in responding to the first

question, she replied “因为 [yīnwèi] (because) the water molecules have less energy and are moving slower until they stop moving and stick to each other.” She expressed words in the target language that were familiar to students because in her instruction, she prioritized conveyance of meaning by intentionally translanguaging between Mandarin and English to facilitate comprehension.

Importantly, the latter two utterances demonstrated translanguaging, in the form of interactive code-switching, because they depicted the fluid functional languaging practices of both an emergent bilingual (the student) and a more seasoned bilingual (the teacher). In the case of the student question about the thermodynamics of matter, the boy repeated the more familiar phrase “蒸发” for “evaporate.” Though Ms. Tang had explained this concept before in the context of water, the student used translanguaging to cater this inquiry to meet a personal curiosity. He was using Mandarin to show Ms. Tang that he understood the phenomenon of evaporation and translanguaged to English to convey “rocks” since he did not remember the Mandarin word for this object. Later in the semester, translanguaging was deployed intentionally and practically by this emergent bilingual, as he accessed his “full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283, parenthetical in original).

In Ms. Tang’s response to the question about the freezing of water, to optimize student comprehension, she utilized her entire linguistic repertoire to focus her comment to what her students could comprehend. She told me in an interview, “I used Chinese (Mandarin) when I knew they understood what I was saying. For anything more complicated, or for things I had not taught before, I would add more English while using Chinese.” Thus, as the semester progressed, she prioritized communication over linguistic purity continuing to utilize whichever language was easier to understand.

To synthesize observations of science lessons, it was apparent that an evolution in favor of more Chinese language use was observed by both the teacher and students. However, the insertion of Chinese was targeted to interaction with the teacher and to the use of content terminology. Obvious also was the use of translanguaging to negotiate meaning in content-based interactions. For instance, in class, the students worked on different hands-on projects, like making a water cycle chart. During this activity as with others throughout the semester, students continued to use mostly English to converse among themselves. Yet, instruction in science became a bilingual, translanguaging venture as the teacher’s statements, as well as those of her students, were an organic mixture of Mandarin and English, with each language used purposefully to best depict the speaker’s intended message. Chinese was used occasionally in student questions, and Ms. Tang’s responses would be about 20% Chinese, though when she used the Chinese of unfamiliar terminology, she was sure to speak slowly and follow with the English translation. Since there was no end-of-the-year science exam, there was no final quantitative indication of improved science learning beyond class-based work, classroom tests, and course grades. Yet, I observed that student interest in science as a discipline greatly improved as these learners

continued class discussions outside of class, and they showed mastery of the different science standards as evidenced by unit tests, all completed in English.

Math

Ms. Tang also taught the students math. In math, the students learned how to identify any number up to 1,000 in Chinese. They utilized operational terms like 加 (*jiā*), add, 减 (*jiǎn*), subtract, and 等于 (*děng yú*), equals, in both Chinese and English. Ms. Tang also taught place values in Chinese and English, like 个位 (*gè wèi*), one's place, 十位 (*shí wèi*), ten's place, 百位 (*bǎi wèi*), hundred's place, and 千位 (*qiān wèi*), or thousand's place. Much like in science, she originally taught mostly in English with common math terminology in both Chinese and English, moving gradually to only in Chinese for these terms. Per test scores, students in Ms. Tang's class outperformed their peers in non-translanguaging bilingual settings and regular mainstream math classes on the official end-of-the-year math exam.

The students used many manipulatives, like interlocking base ten blocks in constructing certain numbers. There would be base ten, base hundred, and base thousand blocks that the students would build for those numbers. The students also used a mock economy with play cash to simulate different types of business transactions in student-run restaurants. Groups of these students made menus, and set prices, and Ms. Tang would distribute pretend coins. They pretended to cook and sell these items, and the rest of the students acted as customers purchasing foods from the restaurants. Directions given by Ms. Tang were partially in English, as were the exchanges between students. However, some utterances familiar to the students were spoken entirely in Mandarin, like numerical values and simple requests. Thus, the observable exchanges between students were often translanguaging utterances, as each language was leveraged with intention.

The menus were written in English, but the money had Chinese characters representing one, 一 (*yī*), five, 五 (*wǔ*), ten, 十 (*shí*), and twenty-five, 二十五 (*èr shí wǔ*) (see Appendix A). All menu items had only cent values. In their transactions, the students had to calculate the correct value using a combination of the coins, and correct change needed to be provided by the vendors. The students used Chinese when referring to the cost of the items and the change. They were also taught phrases like “我要一个” (*wǒ yào yí gè*), or “I want one,” followed by the English phrase for the item. For example, a student might say, “我要一个 chocolate ice cream,” a common expression on my day of observation, and translanguaging between Chinese and English. Students were taught the Chinese terms for describing the amount for different types of items.

In addition, the students were also tasked with writing word problems using mostly simplified Mandarin script on the board. In one instance (See Appendix B), two students wrote a word problem that read: “Evan has 25 cars. Hayden has 88 more cars than Evan. 1) How many cars does Hayden have? 2) How many cars in total do Evan and Hayden have?” Ms. Tang kept the template for the problem on the board in Mandarin but allowed students to change the names of the people (in English), the quantity, the item (e.g., cars) (mostly in English), and “more” to “less” (in Mandarin). In this way, students could refer to different classmates on different trials, calculate

different amounts of different items they were interested in, and reconceptualize the operation of the problem between addition and subtraction. They could also translanguage to leverage their entire linguistic repertoire to construct these personally meaningful problems.

The fact that most of the Chinese in this sentence stayed the same on the board allowed students to learn the paradigm for comparisons in Chinese. For example, the phrase 总共 (*zǒng gòng*) meant “in total,” and the character 比 (*bǐ*) designated a comparison would follow. They utilized English to write the content words and items for comparison that shifted with each student’s example. Thus, at that moment, the students only needed to learn to read, write, and speak those comparison words, but could translanguage both in writing and speech to English for all other words to fit the sentence to their personal messages. For instance, they did not need to know how to write the Chinese character for “cars” to personalize the aforementioned word problem but could just write the word in English while the remainder of the sentence was in Mandarin. Other items students came up with, like “Hot Cheetos,” as well as the names of classmates, did not have direct Chinese translations, so these words were preserved in English to reflect their exact intentions via translanguaging with the rest of the Chinese sentence. In this way, their interactions could be characterized as strategically communicating from “one linguistic repertoire with features that have been socially constructed as belonging to two separate languages” (García & Li, 2014, p. 2).

Similarly, the concept of comparisons of values could be reinforced with initial instruction in English and repetition of the Chinese translation (both in speech and writing) while English was used to personalize the learning. In other words, the conceptual knowledge was initially taught to the students in English with the help of manipulatives to reach both visual and tactile learners and reinforced by Chinese translations which also taught Chinese. Finally, the math content was internalized by the students using their dominant language and Ms. Tang scaffolding their prior knowledge in English. Additionally, students who spoke languages other than English or Mandarin were encouraged to share translations of terms or ideas the class was learning in these other languages (e.g., Hindi, Spanish).

Certainly, the inclusion of more English than was mandated by the school here was essential in the instruction to provide comprehensible input (Krashen, 2014) to learners to facilitate acquisition of math content. However, the use of Mandarin, both orally and in writing, was sustained throughout by translations, codeswitching, and code-meshing. By doing this, translanguaging was an instructional and communicative tool that expanded students’ math learning as well as linguistic repertoire in this discipline.

The prioritization of teaching content while ensuring that linguistic input would be understood was practical in nature because all end-of-the-year high-stakes exams were in English. The science terminology, the math concepts, and the student responses on these evaluations were all conveyed in English.

Translanguaging Pedagogy in Ms. Tang's Classrooms

This exploration revealed promising aspects of instruction that uses translanguaging as a tool for learning. First, translanguaging practices in Ms. Tang's classroom were multifaceted since they integrated different languages, cultures, and cognitive strategies in teaching content and promoting growth in more than one language. In terms of using multiple languages to learn these practices encouraged the flow from two languages while at the same time they provided a meta-perspective regarding languages that may encourage students to cross over between multiple other languages (See Appendix C). In this example, students learned and wrote down the English and Chinese translations for "hello" and "I need to use the potty." The students learned how the same meaning could be expressed via multiple means, both in script and in speech.

Ms. Tang also subscribed to a cultural asset-based approach (MacSwan, 2020) echoing the earlier Funds of Knowledge strategy recommended by Moll et al. (1992). She drew on students' cultural backgrounds to enrich her class. For example, the Indian girl who spoke Hindi, was made to be proud of her heritage language. Ms. Tang often asked this girl the Hindi translations for certain words the class was learning and then commented on the similarities or distinctions between the three languages of English, Mandarin, and Hindi.

Finally, students were given a metalinguistic perspective of how human languages capture meaning and how those meanings could have nuanced differences. In another example, the currency that the class learned was the U.S. system that consisted of penny, nickel, dime, quarter, and dollar. But there are no nickels or quarters in China, and all Indian currency denominations are centered on the rupee, with one, two, five, and ten-rupee denominations, with the absence of the quarter and the inclusion of the two-value coin. Students had an opportunity to consider these distinctions in enhancing their metacognitive understandings and metalinguistic knowledge.

In this instructional context, intended to be a primarily monoglossic Mandarin space, Ms. Tang's intentional allocation of English heralded a transformative effect, in that students' full linguistic repertoires were accessed in creative ways (Sánchez et al., 2018). In strategically deploying languages, students might utilize Mandarin for current class content and then use English to personalize that learning. As with the word problems, students intentionally utilized languages to construct personally meaningful math learning. Rather than two monolinguals in one, an English-speaker and a Mandarin-speaker, Ms. Tang's students were navigating purposefully within a single unified linguistic repertoire that contained elements of each language in reading and composing, which were able to be used together to convey meaning (Fu et al., 2019). As mentioned earlier, in my conversation with the principal, Dr. Jones, she emphasized that Ms. Tang's students significantly outperformed those in other classes in her grade, according to end-of-the-year math test scores and additional science evaluations.

Second, this investigation underscored the importance of planning for and strategically implementing translanguaging to support content and language learning. Factors that guided Ms. Tang's use of translanguaging were the languaging needs of students and the discipline being taught. While in science, English was relatively more

emphasized, math instruction favored Mandarin. The complexity of science concepts prompted the teacher to support their instruction through English. In math, she encountered terms that could not be directly translated across languages. As explained earlier, because there was no nickel, dime, or quarter coin in Chinese, students were taught to say five cents or 五分钱 (wǔ fēn qián), ten cents or 十分钱 (shí fēn qián), and twenty-five cents or 二十五分钱 (èr shí wǔ fēn qián), respectively. Thus, the concept of cent value for these English coins would be reinforced, while their numerical Chinese translations would also be strengthened.

Indeed, Ms. Tang shared in an interview that one reason for not limiting 90% of her instruction strictly to Chinese was the realization that certain English terms did not have direct Chinese translations. Actually, the nuances across languages prevented literal one-to-one correspondences between equivalent notions, thus highlighting a translanguaging practice that preserved the meaning of certain words in their original vernacular (Fu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, because of the emphasis on numbers in math, Ms. Tang explained that she was generally able to allocate more Mandarin as compared to her science instruction, wherein she utilized relatively more English per her own admission. Thus, her language allocation was the organic result of the languaging needs of her students coupled with the genre-based language of the disciplines.

Third, because students had to access technological support to cross over between languages regularly, they gained technological competence by learning to utilize digital translation resources, such as Google Translate. Students were encouraged to look on Google Translate to research the morphology and phonology of certain Chinese translations of English words. Students were not penalized for not knowing or remembering a certain Chinese word but learned how to search for the correct word themselves. In this way, greater independence was instilled as the students became the actors in their learning.

Fourth, findings suggest that in this classroom, learning was facilitated using a combination of instructional practices aligned with translanguaging. In fact, it is possible to conclude that the choice of a translanguaging policy, or her open language policy that saw all her students' languages as available for communication and learning, was an outcome of an informed and open view of teaching and learning. My observations and discussions indicated that Ms. Tang had an in-depth understanding of her students, their background knowledge, learning styles, and personalities to best engage them in learning. By including hands-on components that related to the real world with tactile and cooperative tasks, the students were kept focused on the learning components throughout the class. She was also sure to reteach certain concepts using mostly English if she felt her students were not comprehending the material.

A key to using translanguaging in this classroom seems to be that students' learning was not limited by their additional language competency, but rather, language acumen developed because of learning the material. Meaning-making and authentic organic communication was prioritized over linguistic restrictions. Students were not penalized for not knowing the Mandarin for an idea, even as they wrote on the board or made class contributions. Over time, they were encouraged to utilize Mandarin as much

as they could but understood they could employ their English lexicon for an idea which they could not yet express in Mandarin, especially early in a unit.

Fifth, Ms. Tang's students also benefitted socially by being able to communicate in her class in the language that was most comfortable for them. All the students had English as their dominant language. Only the Chinese American boy, the Hispanic girl, and the Indian American girl had different heritage languages, as Fujianese, Spanish, and Hindu were spoken by their families. Because Ms. Tang encouraged communication, her students felt more welcomed to utilize English socially instead of remaining more reticent because of their hesitancy to speak Mandarin. In my observation of the other Mandarin class where English was discouraged, students were noticeably much quieter throughout the class and were often silent even when they were prompted to speak by the instructor. In fact, my observations and interviews suggested that the students and Ms. Tang developed helpful bonds because they could communicate in English as well as Mandarin with each other and with her. Thus, they could converse genuinely and easily with their teacher and each other.

When I spoke with the Mandarin teachers in the third-grade dual language program, they commented on how Ms. Tang's students needed less refreshing on math and science concepts and were noticeably more engaged with the materials compared with students who had previously studied in other parallel classes. In fact, not only was their grasp of content superior per teacher report, their Mandarin usage and understanding was also superior.

Limitations

The possible selection bias for students in the bilingual program whose participation was based on parental choice is an issue to consider in interpreting the findings. Also, one difference among the Mandarin teachers was the fact that Ms. Tang possessed more extensive professional preparation than the others. As discussed in the scholarly literature (Deyrich & Stunzel, 2014), teacher preparation is an important factor in effective instruction and thus may have influenced the findings.

Conclusion

The translanguaging-inspired approach ultimately adopted by Ms. Tang resulted in many benefits to the students. The study presented here indicated greater pupil investment and interest in a learning context marked by the liberal use of their home languages alongside Mandarin Chinese, prioritizing meaningful communication in bilingual math and science in this one-way dual language setting.

In the early grades, the understanding of key mathematical constructs is crucial in providing foundational background knowledge from which to scaffold concepts, such as multiplication, division, and fractions, along with a solid, secure number sense. The focus for the early grades needs to be development of a solid math and science background that can be understood in each of the languages acquired by the students. This study suggested that restricting much of children's input to a language they are only beginning to learn is bound to make them lose interest in both the content and the second language itself. To emulate the success of French immersion in Canada,

Hancock's ambitious experiment prioritized second language immersion to the detriment of comprehension.

In addition, most of the Emergent Bilingual students in Hancock Elementary did not have anyone with whom to practice Mandarin Chinese once they left class. Observations outside the classrooms confirmed a communicative pattern dominated using English. Such language use patterns were typical on the playground, where student interactions outside of class throughout the entire semester were nearly completely in English as well. These exchanges outside of the classroom were devoid of the academic expectation of Mandarin usage when students engaged with each other purely socially. Their world outside of school was devoid of this language, and so they could not continue their language learning in their daily lives. This added to the difficulty encountered by the class in learning science and math content almost exclusively through Mandarin. By prioritizing communication and offering comprehensible input through translanguaging, content was successfully taught bilingually.

Future research must consider the complex intersections of variables involved in developing bilingualism and biliteracy through schooling, both generally and in particular for Mandarin/English bilinguals. Merging language teaching with content in bilingual and biliterate educational settings requires careful development and evaluation of curricula that can be delivered *meaningfully* by thoroughly prepared teachers with a rich background in language and pedagogy, as indicated by the bilingual professional education standards (Nevárez-La Torre, 2015/2019). To reiterate, real communication and comprehensible input should be privileged over rigid policies of language separation; current best practices support such a translanguaging approach (García, 2020). The sociolinguistic experiences of learners outside of classroom settings must also be considered by researchers, curriculum developers, teachers, and teacher educators.

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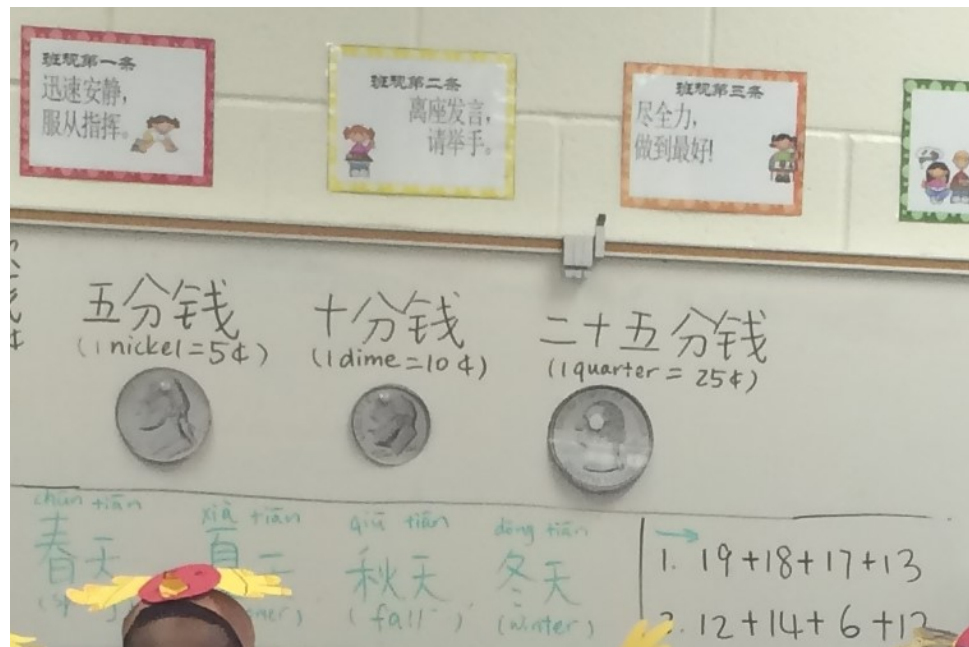
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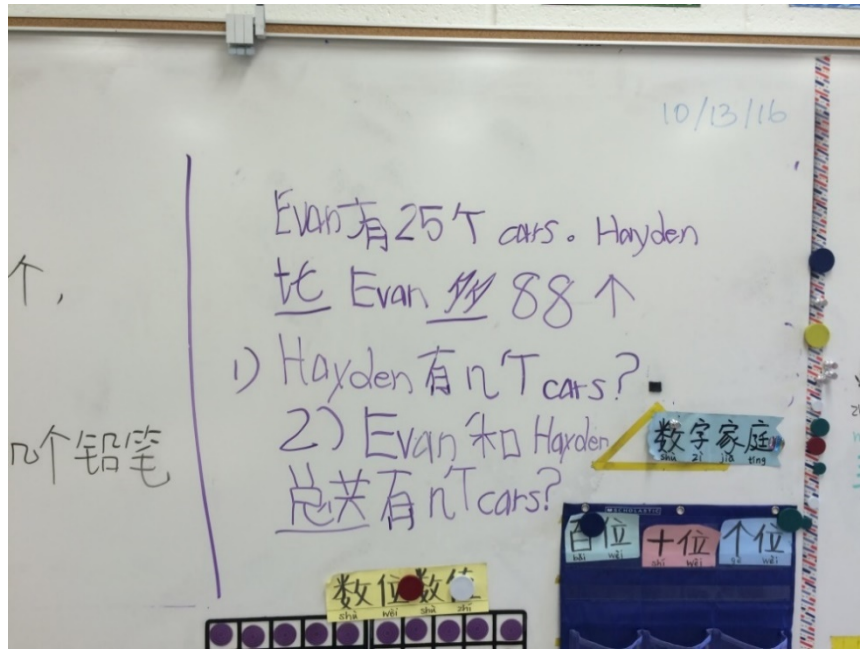
Appendix A

Photograph of Ms. Tang's Whiteboard with Laminated Enlarged U.S. Nickle, Dime, and Quarter Coins, with Simplified Chinese Translations, Their English Names, and Numerical Values



Appendix B

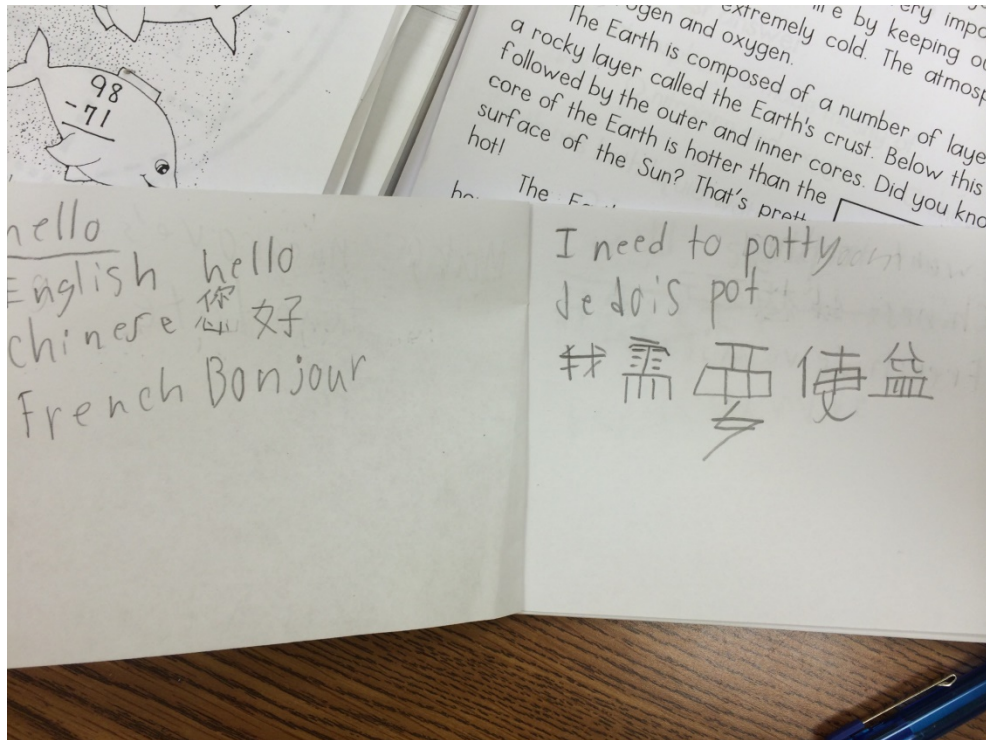
Translanguaging Word Problem Template Describing Word Problems of Numerical Comparisons



This sentence reads: Evan has 25 cars. Hayden has 88 more cars than Evan. 1) How many cars does Hayden have? 2) How many cars in total do Evan and Hayden have?

Appendix C

Translations of English and Chinese Phrases



The meaning of the above Chinese phrases: hello; I need to use the potty.

Media Review Introduction

Visual Learning: A New Path for *JMER*

Patricia Velasco

Queens College, City University of New York

This issue represents a new beginning for *JMER*. As we all know, the influence of videos and social media on our everyday culture is undeniable. With digital videos continuing to gain popularity, it seems only natural that this familiar and widespread platform should extend into the education system. Thanks to Tatyana Kleyn's contribution in this area, *JMER* has taken the step of reviewing videos for the first time - the videos that she has produced and directed. Kleyn's videos depict immigrant lives in different facets. We hear the voices of the parents, and their children. They speak directly to us, explaining the perils of their situation but also evidencing their resilience and determination to create the best future for their children. The video collection also highlights the importance of empathic teachers who know how to tap into the rich cultural and linguistic capital that multilingual/multicultural students bring to our classrooms.

Immigration to the United States can be a story or a lived experience that always spreads across time and covers thousands of miles. We are all familiar with the variety of faceless government agencies that collide with a tapestry of hopeful, determined, and often desperate petitioners. Kleyn's videos help us dig deeper into the different lives that immigrant students integrate, as they navigate different educational systems, two or more languages, different cultures, and complex school systems with their embedded challenges.

Our intent is to expand the dissemination of scholarly work related to multilingual education through the rigorous and critical examination of media productions in this area. The initial review, written by D'Andrea Martínez, opens a door to have scholarly discussions about this video collection where professors, parents, and immigrant and non-immigrant students can watch it and participate in conversations about the educational implications of the authentic images depicted in the videos. D'Andrea Martínez' review can introduce pre-service and in-service teachers to this indispensable resource that may deepen their knowledge about multilingual students' backgrounds, and to foster dialogues around immigration to pave the way for building a positive classroom culture.

As *JMER* editors, we are proud and excited to introduce the review of educational media as a venue for critical and scholarly thought. D'Andrea Martínez wrote a review of Tatyana Kleyn's videos with elegance and much insight that showcase the complex and rich lives of immigrants and the value of visual learning.

Multimedia Review

Education as Advocacy: The Foundations of Support for Immigrant Youth

Pamela D'Andrea Martínez

New York University

Film Series Reviewed:

Kleyn, T. (2019). *Supporting immigrants in schools*. The City College of New York and the New York State Education Department. <https://www.cunyiiie.org/videos>

Kleyn, T. (Ed.). (2019). *Supporting immigrants in schools: Resource Guide*. The City College of New York and New York State Education Department. 54p. Available as download from <https://cuny-iie.org/>.

Despite an anti-immigration climate across the United States, immigrant rights and racial equity activists in New York have worked to establish policy protections for immigrants, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students of color. The short film series, *Supporting Immigrants in Schools*, is part of a larger landscape of support for vulnerable youth and families. The series was released in 2019, the same year that the New York State DREAM Act (2019) passed, and the New York State Education Department (2019) released its *Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework*. Policy protections matter in creating conditions of support for immigrant youth in schools. Still, policy alone does not provide schools and educators the tools to visualize and enact equitable education. This is where *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* does its most important and unique work. It not only identifies challenges but also highlights how some schools already reflect a positive perspective on immigrants and embrace an advocacy stance when working with immigrant youth and families. Thus, it goes beyond outlining problems and making recommendations for what schools can do. It demonstrates district-wide, schoolwide, and classroom-level strategies that schools and communities in New York already do.

In this article, I review the *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* series as a whole. After a brief description of the background to the series and its design, I then summarize the key ideas presented in each of the films provided by the many voices featured in the series, such as those of students, teachers, and school and district staff. Throughout the summaries offered here, I aim to contextualize the series content within scholarly conversation about asset-based and culturally sustaining approaches to

education. The series focuses on what is already happening in New York schools that offers a welcoming and supportive stance to educating immigrant youth. The hospitality that the featured schools create exemplifies the foundation of a school-wide asset-based perspective toward immigrant youth that is necessary to meaningfully include them. The films demonstrate how schools can treat immigrant experiences, languages, and cultures as strengths from the moment youth register in school. Still, recent scholarship on *culturally sustaining education* finds asset-based approaches are not sufficient to combat the forms cultural and linguistic oppression that vulnerable students face in and out of schools (Paris & Alim, 2014). Thus, throughout the summaries of the films, I point to the moments when each exhibit an advocacy stance to working with immigrant youth and families and I highlight the more *sustaining* practices and ideas featured in the films. Finally, I conclude with a few ways the series can work in practice and areas the films could be expanded.

Brief Overview of Documentary Series.¹

The films in the *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* series are directed and produced by Dr. Tatyana Kleyn and funded by the New York State Education Department. Dr. Kleyn is an associate professor of bilingual education and TESOL at The City College of New York. As a scholar activist, she has taken to filmmaking to document immigrant experiences. Before this film series, she directed and produced the film *Una Vida, Dos Países* and the *Living Undocumented* series. *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* is comprised of four short documentaries of approximately 10 minutes in length each: (1) *Key Immigration Issues*; (2) *Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants*; (3) *Immigration in Elementary Schools*; and (4) *Immigration in Secondary Schools*. The films take the viewer to several schools across New York to share information and showcase district, school, and classroom practices that support immigrant youth. The filmmaker primarily interviews educators at varying levels in the education system and immigrant and refugee youth at the featured schools. Viewers will also observe the day-to-day interactions of immigrant youth with classmates and teachers while learning. The films have upbeat music accompanying the flurries of youth moving in the hallways and learning in the classrooms of schools. While the series is not narrated, each film covers the theme specified in its title through organized sub-themes that appear as subtitled sections. After each section's content, a list of *Educator Actions* appears which recap actionable steps and information gleaned from the interviews and observations of that section. *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* can be found on the CUNY Initiative on Immigration & Education website, <http://cuny-iie.org>. The film series webpage also includes a resource guide for educators with resources ranging from teaching and curriculum support to resources for immigrant families.

Film 1: Key Immigration Issues

The first film of the series, *Key Immigration Issues*, highlights the legal realities immigrants face and discusses how schools can welcome—and sometimes reject—immigrants. Jesús Castellano, a former student who traveled to the United States independently² at age 14, shares his registration story with Tatyana Kleyn, the filmmaker. Castellano wanted to register for school, but they turned him away because he did not have his parents with him. He was left feeling *desconocido* (*like a stranger or*

outsider) and he decided to work instead. In contrast to Castellano's experience, the film takes us to Trinity Elementary School in New Rochelle, NY. There, Principal Michael Hildebrand describes how welcoming immigrants is part of the school's structure.

Trinity Elementary is welcoming to students, and it is also complying with the law. During Trinity Elementary's two-day new student orientation process, parents meet with the English as a New Language teacher, while their children enrolling at the school tour the campus with current students who speak their language. Hildebrand details the information the school asks of the new family (e.g., proof of residency), and what they do not ask for (e.g., immigration status). To address the issue of turning away independent youth, in the same film, Dr. Kleyn interviews Stephanie Delia, an immigration attorney. Delia outlines the legal protections in place for undocumented youth under the Plyler v. Doe ruling (1982). The court decision mandates that schools cannot collect information about immigration status or turn students away because of their statuses. Between interviews, the film pauses to display lists of *Educator Actions*, such as preparing a district plan if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shows up at school and the types of documents schools should and should not ask for at registration.

Key Immigration Issues lays a strong foundation for educators to understand that immigrants experience many levels of social precarity (Campano et al., 2013) and that schools can have an active role in combatting these. The film also demonstrates how an asset-based lens for working with immigrants can look. For example, Principal Hildebrand does not say he "has to" but that he "gets to" greet new families, positioning himself as someone who is fortunate enough to be the one who calls families to make appointments. That is, rather than a deficit lens that would position immigrant youth as a burden to schools, the film establishes immigrant students as members of school communities and schools as responsible for including them (Gay, 2010).

As a whole, *Key Immigration Issues* demonstrates how immigrant support can start from the moment a young person shows up to register for school. Still, even when schools welcome students, they can purport multicultural values that are complicit with anti-immigrant sentiment because they ultimately subscribe to assimilationist educational practices for their immigrant youth (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018). Because welcoming immigrant youth and families is not enough to meaningfully engage them in the processes of schools (Baquedano-López et al., 2013), viewers would benefit from an additional part to *Key Immigration Issues* that shows how Trinity Elementary School's hospitality extends beyond an initial welcome to the school.

Film 2: Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants

The second film, *Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants*, introduces the system-wide endeavor of supporting immigrants in schools. From community and district levels to the classroom level, the approaches shown in this film revolve around a central idea: To educate refugees and immigrants, district and school staff must have strong relationships with them.

This film confirms how important it is for students to feel *conocidos* (*known*). The film opens with Prince and Shahnaz, two 7th grade refugee students in International School (I.S.) 45 in Buffalo, N.Y. Both of them advise schools to get to know

their refugee students in order to help them. The film demonstrates how educators at I.S. 45 build strong relationships by breaking away from one-way models of teaching, where teachers design lessons only considering their own perspectives. Instead, the teachers interviewed at I.S. 45, John Ellicot, and Kevin Daugherty, recommend and model two-way approaches where their primary source for teaching choices is what they have come to know about their students. The film takes us to their classrooms, capturing students working in small groups and freely using their many languages as they share their written work with one another about their immigration journeys.

At the district level, Buffalo Public Schools, which has enrolled 22,000 refugee students in the last five years, has a strategy for welcoming and getting to know their new families. According to Nadia Nashir, the Assistant Superintendent of Multilingual Education interviewed in the film, the district has a central registration center that acts as an information hub. There, families are assigned a Cultural Resource Specialist of their same language and cultural background as a guide. The district also creates opportunities for local organizations, and even the FBI, to get to know refugee families and hear their stories.

In *Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants*, the educators at all levels demonstrate how to build the strong relationships prerequisite for meaningful educational support. No amount of proximity to refugees and immigrants can replace the humility of listening to them and appreciating them for what they bring to their new communities. Strong relationships serve to open school and classroom spaces to make room for immigrant and refugee youth to freely bring in their full selves. When students are free to bring their cultures, languages, and experiences into their schools it not only makes for a welcoming environment but is a first step to what Ladson-Billings (1995) calls *cultural competence*, when educators know about students' cultures, languages, and experiences and position these as *vehicles for learning* (p. 160). The teachers in the film embrace their student's immigrant experiences as vehicles for learning when they selected books with stories of immigration and when they connected the history they are teaching to what today's immigrant and refugees are living.

However, during his interview with Tatyana Kleyn in the film, John Ellicot, a social studies teacher at I.S. 45, says he wishes he could delve more into today's immigration issues in his class. This comment goes unaddressed in the film, but it has potential for important discussion about how culturally relevant education for immigrant youth can span all subject matters (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). It also signals that while educators may be thinking of what students bring to the classroom as vehicles for learning, they may not yet be centering immigrant and refugee experiences, languages, and cultures as foci of instruction across all subjects, that is, *sustain* the cultural pluralism brought in by students (Alim & Paris, 2017). Addressing Ellicot's wish would go a long way in showing educators how asset-mindedness can become a culturally *sustaining* practice. Because immigrants and refugees make up some of the most politically and economically vulnerable groups in the United States, an asset mindset to pedagogy might not be enough to combat the anti-immigration and racism that would erase immigrant cultures and languages.

Film 3: Immigration in Elementary Schools

With the groundwork for immigrant support set by the first two films, the third film, *Immigration in Elementary Schools*, dives into how one teacher, Rebeca Madrigal, embeds support through teaching about immigration issues. The film opens with first-grade students sitting on the reading carpet with the familiar squirrelness of young children engaged in learning.

Books and papers fill the bins behind the children in a classroom filled with colorful posters. A sarape, a symbol of indigeneity, is draped over a table near Madrigal who sits on a chair facing the students while reading *El Muro*, by Philippe de Kemmeter (2005). *El Muro* is about a family that erects a wall between their house and the neighbor's house to feel safe. The family next door is too different from them. "They haven't even tried to be friends with them!" says Felix, a student in the class. In their discussion, the children unpack the meaning of the wall, how the story's wall is related to issues of immigration today, and how these issues could and do affect them personally.

Madrigal carefully selects what she calls "authentic" reading materials, like *El Muro*, in which young people can see themselves represented and that target issues lived and discussed by them with their families. Madrigal shares her own immigration story with her students, wanting them to see that she is proud of who she is and where she is from. The film demonstrates how directly teaching about immigration and utilizing literature that centers students' languages, cultures, and experiences, is working.

In the clip, first grade students react to the story and freely make connections to their own lives. One student comments about meeting a new classmate and feeling wary about her at first, even though they became friends later. Another young person talks about his family coming to the United States for a better life. Yet another student questions out loud why the President of the United States would want some people in the country and others not. This film shows that even as early as first-grade, students can and do think critically about social issues to challenge racism and xenophobia. The film does not explicitly attribute Madrigal's teaching and curriculum choices to a specific pedagogy; still, Madrigal's teaching is an example of a culturally sustaining practice (Alim & Paris, 2017):

1. She represents her students' lived experiences.
2. She uses strategies to build trust and community with students and their families.
3. She fosters critical dialogue with students to challenge oppression.
4. She makes space for students to use any combination of Spanish and English varieties.

These teaching actions honor students' full linguistic repertoires (Otheguy et al., 2015) and help them to become agents in their own sociopolitical lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Film 4: Immigration in Secondary Schools

The final film in the series, *Immigration in Secondary Schools*, focuses on the way one New York City high school for immigrant youth is breaking down the barriers students face. For example, School Counselor Linda Pociano helps students prepare for life after high school. She provides support as they fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and college applications and finds scholarships for undocumented youth. When there are changes to immigration policy, she and her colleagues meet to understand the policy and then get the new information out to families quickly.

Students, too, are part of the school's support system for immigrants through their involvement in the high school's immigration justice club, the school's DREAM Team. The many young people involved in the DREAM Team raise money for scholarships, mount campaigns around school that make visible their solidarity with undocumented peers, and they host speakers such as immigration lawyers to address students' pressing concerns. The film highlights the importance of protecting students' legal citizenship statuses by making the school's DREAM Team an immigration justice club, rather than a club of undocumented students. This protection is extended in how the film shows clips of activities at the school's DREAM Team using a filter that makes the footage cartoon-like to anonymize youth participants in the group. This may also be why the school's name is not shared in the video, unlike the schools in the other three films of the series.

Jae Berlin, a science teacher at the school, and Mariano Muñoz, a parent coordinator, cofacilitate the DREAM Team. In the film, they discuss why they create spaces where students can make meaning of immigration issues and tackle them. For Berlin and Muñoz, engaging in social transformation is essential to attending to students' social-emotional needs. Doing this, Berlin and Muñoz are embracing their roles as "engaged public intellectuals" (Giroux, 2020) by connecting with broader immigrant justice work because challenging the oppression their students face both in and out of school is a necessary component of education. In their conceptualization of a "socially just, culturally sustaining education" for immigrant youth, Lee & Walsh (2017, p.191) argue that engaging issues that affect immigrants, such as anti-immigration policies and the harshness of legal citizenship, matters for immigrant youth to make sense of the inequities they face. They suggest educators adopt notions of justice-oriented citizenship that, like the DREAM Team in *Immigration in Secondary Schools*, centers youth as agents of change who challenge oppression and actively craft their futures regardless of legal immigration status.

Together, the school community members featured in *Immigration in Secondary Schools* are practicing advocacy as inextricable from education, a role that blurs the line between adult responsibilities and student responsibilities. The final film in the series shows that when all members of a school community embrace the transformative power of pedagogy *with* and not just for (Freire, 1970/2017) immigrant youth, they can co-construct education that provides opportunities for youth to claim their power to make change.

The Films in Practice

The first and second films in the series, *Key Immigration Issues and Approaches to Educating Refugees and Immigrants*, emphasize a type of hospitality for addressing the immediate needs of immigrants, learning about them, and building strong relationships. The third and fourth films, *Immigration in Elementary Schools* and *Immigration in Secondary Schools*, delve into the pedagogical and school-wide inner-workings of a more radical hospitality (Campano et al., 2013) where immigrant youth, families, and educators work together to advocate for immigrant justice. This creates a gradual shift across the films from asset-based ideas of education that lean toward inclusive schooling, to a more social justice-oriented stance on immigrant belonging. The gradual shift from inclusion to justice indicates the films should be viewed together and, specifically, that the first two films should not be viewed without completing the thematic arch to a more culturally sustaining practice.

When the filmmakers interview youth or capture them in the hallways and classrooms, they consistently portray their linguistic flexibility (Lee & Walsh, 2017) and their critical brilliance. If educators center these youth practices as the objects of learning, they could be actively working toward culturally sustaining education. The films also identify the types of school structures and classroom activities that make space for these immigrant youth practices. For example, in the second film, the teacher announces to students they can speak in their “home languages” as part of the class activity and students begin speaking their many languages to each other in small groups. In the same film, Chelsea Ellis, an English as a New Language teacher at Lafayette International Community High School (P.S. 207), shared a story of when she was planning a trip to Nepal and her 10th grade student, Prakrity, showed her on a map the refugee camp where her family lives. Together, they tell the story of how Ellis met Prakrity’s family and took pictures with them in Nepal. This example of border crossing, though primarily by the teacher, is an example of how immigrant youth lead transnational lives (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018). Ellis and Prakrity are showcasing how teachers can become informed about refugee experiences through connecting to refugee organizations, but because the opportunity to travel to refugee camps outside the United States is an uncommon experience, viewers may also want to learn the every-day ways they can support youth transnationalism. That is, the film series could expand on how educators help sustain youth’s connections to their geographies of birth and migration journeys, as part of a culturally sustaining practice (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018).

Taken together the films are a strong tool for professional development at all levels within the school system. They extend their asset-based lens to the featured schools themselves, showing viewers what schools are doing well rather than focusing on what they do not get right when supporting immigrant youth. The teachers, school staff, and school and district administrators in the film share testimonies that reveal a solid philosophical guiding post to their work: that they are passionate about their immigrant students, that immigrant youth are welcome, and that their work as educators far extends traditional ideas of teaching and learning to necessarily encompass advocacy for immigrant rights (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In February 2020, I facilitated a workshop for first-year teachers on culturally and linguistically sustaining education for immigrant youth. Many teachers reported attending the workshop because they felt overwhelmed by the anti-immigration policies affecting many of their students. They knew from experience what research has confirmed: The degrading anti-immigration national rhetoric and harsh immigration enforcement that happens outside of schools is reflected within schools and directly affects immigrant youth (Ee & Gandara, 2019). While they were unclear about the ways they could support their students, these new teachers came to the workshop already understanding that immigrant youth and families often have pressing legal and social-emotional needs. To have a supportive educational stance, schools cannot ignore these needs just as they cannot forget to see the humanity in each young person and family.

The teachers who came to the workshop were at the cusp of the type of critical analysis and reflective work that the *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* series explores. Participants in this teacher workshop benefitted from watching the films. For example, in the first film, *Key Immigration Issues*, Bridgit Bye, the principal of a high school in New York City, shares the story of how one student's detention rattled the school community into fighting immigration injustices. Educators watching the film can learn how working across schools to support immigrants can foster strong community bonds and those bonds can in turn create more opportunities for support. As a whole, the four documentaries help educators know what it means to advocate with students, to respond to their social-emotional needs, and to create safe and welcoming school environments.

The films make a powerful statement of how support must be embedded within all areas of school. This comprehensive support is bound by common principles of deep listening and relationship-building that center immigrant realities. Unfortunately, many schools and educators shy away from centering issues of immigration. This could be happening because schools may perceive a legal risk if they acknowledge immigrant experiences. For example, schools often misinterpret the protections of undocumented students under the Plyler v. Doe ruling (1982), as explained above, a Supreme Court decision holding that states cannot deny students a free public education, irrespective of their immigration status. They believe that it mandates a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, stopping them from doing what they can to get to know the experiences of immigrant families (Mangual-Figueroa, 2017). Future films and resources need to make a more explicit distinction between building strong relationships with immigrant families and maintaining the legal boundaries that serve to protect immigrant youth in schools. Learning how to navigate this tension is especially necessary for schools that may be new in their journey to support immigrants.

The four films discussed here provide actionable steps for schools to structure an advocacy stance in the education of immigrant youth. For example, the third film, *Immigration in Elementary Schools*, suggests educators discuss difficult issues with students, conduct home visits, and that schools send immigration information to families. Many of the films' suggested actions translate to educator humility and openness, and the ability to connect families and students with essential resources both within and beyond school. Educators interested in starting or deepening their practices

in culturally sustaining education and trauma-informed practices will benefit from watching this film series.

Supporting Immigrants in Schools is equally relevant for researchers interested in translating research into tools for practice and to immigrant families and community members interested in the types of efforts schools can make to support them. That the films are useful to these multiple stakeholders while honoring and centering the work and experiences of so many educators, students, and advocates, is a testament to the excellence of Tatyana Kleyn's work in the film series. *Supporting Immigrants in Schools* is a celebration of immigrant stories in New York, the educators who already embody radical care and advocacy in their work, and the love and justice involved in the collective endeavor of support with immigrants.

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End Notes

¹ Actual names of students and teachers are used in the video series.

² In this article, I use the term “independent” rather than “unaccompanied” to refer to teenage migrants who make their way to the US alone or with other young people considered minors in the US. This term better acknowledges the circumstances of teenage migration whereby young people become independent from their families and migrate out of necessity (Martínez, 2018).

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Chencen Cai, PhD, is currently a researcher at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. She has taught English and Mandarin in Greater China and the US. Her research interests include L2 acquisition, language variation, and cross-cultural communication. She has published in the *Journal of Multilingual Multicultural Development, Languages, and Bilingual Research Journal*.

Lucía Cárdenas Curiel, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Her research examines the conditions that allow emergent multilingual language learners to succeed academically in elementary schools. Her work contributes by looking at the intersection between pedagogical knowledge, disciplinary literacies, and linguistic repertoires simultaneously.

Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth, PhD, is Associate Professor of English Education in the Multilingual Multicultural Studies unit of NYU Steinhardt where she also serves as Academic Director of the International Spouses English Program. Dr. Ebsworth is a member of the Executive Board of the National Association for Bilingual Education. She is co-editor of the text, *Language Maintenance, Revival and Shift in the Sociology of Language and Religion* and was research editor of *Writing and Pedagogy*. Her research interests include language learning and technology, language variation, second language writing, and intercultural pragmatics.

Timothy John Ebsworth, PhD, directed the Master's Programs in TESOL and Bilingual Education at the College of New Rochelle from 1995-2018. He is currently an Adjunct Professor in Second Language Education at Kean University, Union, N.J. and has extensive experience as a college ESL teacher, language teacher educator and researcher. His publications have appeared in the *Bilingual Research Journal, The International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, and the *Journal of Language and Social Interaction*. His interests include intercultural pragmatics and second language writing.

Talia Hurwich, PhD, is a former middle school Hebrew language teacher. Her research examines how graphic novel adaptations of classic texts motivate conversations critical of gender in society. Other areas of interest include comics and graphic novels in the classroom, Hebrew education, game design and role playing in education, gender and education, and Jewish education.

Pamela D'Andrea Martínez is a PhD candidate in Urban Education at New York University, a resource specialist at the NYS Language RBERN and researcher at the NYU Metro Center, an adjunct professor of Teaching and Learning, a former public school teacher, and a proud multilingual Venezuelan. Her research interests include antiracism in schools and equitable education for newcomers.

Sonna Opstad, PhD, has taught graduate students in TESOL and Bilingual Education in New York for 11 years. Her research interests include all aspects of multilingual development, with a focus on the connection between language, identity, and the social/emotional wellbeing of bi/multilinguals. The potential of bi/multiliteracy and translanguaging as tools to assist students in negotiating an identity of strength in US

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Patricia Velasco, EdD, is retired from Queens College, CUNY, where she was an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education (EECE) and coordinator of the Bilingual Education Program. Her research interests include the development of metalinguistic awareness and its role in biliteracy, teacher education, and understanding the language and educational ideologies of Indigenous Mexicans living in NYC. In 2012, she coordinated the work for NYSED Home and New Language Arts Progressions that were part of the Bilingual Common Core Initiative. Patricia co-directed a project for NYSED creating practices for multilingual learners facing the demands embedded in the New Generation Learning Standards.

Ming-Hsuan Wu, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Adelphi University in New York. Her work examines how both students and teachers from diverse backgrounds navigate the official and hidden curricular spaces of urban schools. In particular, she seeks to understand teachers' agentic roles in positively impacting immigrant students' academic and social lives as well as young people's agentic roles in contesting dominant discourses on diversity. Her current scholarship focuses on translanguaging practices in heritage Mandarin classrooms in the US and the experiences of Asian American English teachers in Taiwan.

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Journal of Multilingual Education Research

Publication Description

The *Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER)* is the official journal of the New York State Association for Bilingual Education. Its distinct orientation reflects what is most important to researchers, specialists, and educators in the fields of multilingualism and multilingual education. *JMER* is a vehicle to respond to the changes and growth of knowledge in a variety of national language education issues that have local and regional relevance. It responds to the emerging needs and interests of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, counselors, psychologists, advocates, and community leaders whose work focuses on the successful education of multilingual students.

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- Assessment and evaluation;
- Professional preparation;
- Curriculum design and development;
- Instructional methods, practices, materials, resources, and technology and media;
- Language planning, language policy, and language learning;
- Professional standards and ethics.

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- Have title page, without the author's name, address, or institutional affiliation.
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- Include no more than two half-page size illustrations, tables, or figures or one full-page size illustration, table, or figure.
- Include a complete References section following the **APA 7th edition** format. It is the author's responsibility to make sure that all sources in text are credited in the References section and that all References are properly cited in the text.
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The editors reserve the right to make editorial changes to enhance clarity, concision, and style. The author should be consulted only if the editing has been substantial.