

matsol



# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Equity And Excellence For English Learners

Vol. 45, No. 2 Fall/Winter 2022 - 2023



**INSIDE**

**Library-Based ESOL and Social Justice**

**Add-on ESL Licensure**

**Immigrant Storytelling Program**

## ON THE COVER

December hybrid meeting of directors and coordinators of English Language Education

matsol



# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Equity And Excellence For English Learners

Vol. 45, No.2 Fall/Winter 2022 - 2023

## Contents

---

### MATSOL News

- 4 President's Message
- 6 Updates from MATSOL Staff
- 7 Board Member Spotlight

### Reports

- 9 Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

### Articles

- 15 Library-based ESOL for Adult Immigrants and Refugees: A [Needed] Shift toward Multilingualism and Social Justice  
**MINH NGHIA NGUYEN**
- 22 Language Practices of Bilingual Students and Their Teacher in an Urban SEI Classroom: Translanguaging in Everyday Interactions  
**JOCELYN POWER**
- 30 Differentiated SEI Professional Development for Middle and High School Teachers  
**MICHELLE CARNEY, MONICA L. FILGO, AND MEAGAN HUGHES**
- 45 Certified, but Not an Expert: Advantages and Limitations of Add-on ESL Licensure  
**JENNIFER ALTAVILLA-GIORDANO**
- 51 Storytelling Program Amplifies Immigrant Voices in Falmouth, MA  
**CHERYL HAMILTON AND CHRISTINE NICHOLSON**

### Reviews

- 55 *A is for Bee: An Alphabet Book in Translation* by Ellen Heck  
**REVIEWED BY MAIREAD MAZAN**
- 57 *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* by Hermione Lee  
**REVIEWED BY EILEEN FELDMAN**

# President's Message

## DEAR MATSOL COMMUNITY,

I hope that you all have had a smooth and healthy transition to 2023. I also hope you were able to find moments of rest, reprieve, and joy during the winter break. With the gift of a new year come new opportunities and invitations for challenging ourselves (and others) to try new things, to do things differently, to challenge the status quo, to *re-imagine*. When I think about re-imagining education, I often think of Dr. Ofelia García's work on translanguaging. Translanguaging is the natural, organic, authentic way in which multilinguals interact in the world, as Dr. García puts it in one of her books: "translanguaging or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices is an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable" (2009, p. 44).

If translanguaging is about recognizing and honoring the ways our multilingual learners use language and make meaning, then we need classroom spaces where students can be their authentic, multilingual selves. Something I hear often from folks is, "yes, I believe translanguaging is beneficial, but how do I do this in an SEI or ESL classroom where learning English is the goal? How do I do this if I don't share my students' languages?" I think at the root of these questions is this bigger question that I often ask myself, *How do we center the multilingual majority in a society that is so (standard) English dominant?*

Near the end of 2022 I was gifted a children's book from a good friend who told me, "I know you'll love the way this book approaches language". It was an alphabet book by Ellen Heck titled, *A is for Bee, An Alphabet Book in Translation*. When I first saw it I was immediately drawn to the cover (it is beautiful!) and then I quickly thought to myself, "A is for bee?! Bee starts with B!" Before I opened the cover to begin reading the book, a sentence from my daily Duolingo Brazilian Portuguese lessons popped into my head: "*a abelha não toca nela*" [the bee doesn't touch her], and I thought to myself, "I guess 'a' is for bee in Portuguese, and actually Spanish too (*abeja*) - I never thought about it like that!"

Sure enough, I opened the book and on the page with the letter 'a' were the words *anū* (Igbo), *aamoo* (Ojibwe), *abelha* (Portuguese), and *arı* (Turkish) - all words for bee that begin with an 'a'! My friend, as always, was right - I loved the way this book approached language. An English alphabet book that actually de-centered the English language! It was simultaneously mind blowing, challenging, fascinating, and fun to read a book that presented something as familiar as the letter 'a' with an insect so often associated (in the English language) with the letter 'b'. And for all those Portuguese, Igbo, Ojibwe, Turkish, and Span-

ish speaking students, **both** 'a' and 'b' are for bee!

This book not only pushed me to re-imagine a new way to think about language and alphabet books, but also how we might be more intentional about centering and honoring the way our multilingual learners are thinking about and using language. We don't have to imagine a world where 'a' and 'b' are both for bee, since that world already exists – but we *can* re-imagine a world where we *center* the multilingual reality that 'a' and 'b' (and other letters and sounds) are for bee for many of our multilingual learners.

This theme is present throughout this issue. Be sure to [read the book review by Mai Mazan](#) to learn more about the book *A is for Bee* and get some ideas for your own classroom. [Jocelyn](#)

[Power](#) shares her own experiences as a practitioner researcher and how she has documented and promoted translanguaging practices with her students. [Minh Ngyuen](#) discusses library-based adult ESOL and ways teachers can push back on prescribed curricula that do not honor the linguistic and cultural resources of multilingual students. This issue also includes articles on [differentiating SEI professional development](#) for teachers, [benefits and drawbacks of the add-on ESL License](#), [a description of a storytelling project with students](#), and [a book review on an introduction to biographies](#).

I hope to see many of you at our annual MATSOL conference, in person at the Framingham Sheraton from May 31 – June 1 and online June 7 – 8. Registration is already open at <https://www.matsol.org/2023-conference>.

In pursuit of equity and justice, Chris 

**Chris Montecillo Leider**

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

**I opened the book and on the page with the letter 'a' were the words aṅṅ (Igbo), aamoo (Ojibwe), abelha (Portuguese), and arı (Turkish) – all words for bee that begin with an 'a'! My friend, as always, was right – I loved the way this book approached language. An English alphabet book that actually de-centered the English language!**



# Updates from MATSOL Staff

## MATSOL OFFICE GOES REMOTE

MATSOL has closed our office in Stoughton and the staff is now working remotely. We will continue to connect with members via email, phone, and ZOOM.

## NEW ADDRESS

MATSOL, 160 Alewife Brook Parkway #1201, Cambridge MA 02138

## PHONE

617-820-5099

## EMAIL ADDRESSES

General concerns: [matsol@matsol.org](mailto:matsol@matsol.org)

Registration and membership: [registration@matsol.org](mailto:registration@matsol.org)

Courses and professional learning: [pl@matsol.org](mailto:pl@matsol.org)



MATSOL staff with gifts from Helen's trip to Peru.  
We use the finger puppets to entertain any children who pop into our ZOOM meetings!

## BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### Dr. Lin Zhou

Assistant Teaching Professor, Northeastern University



#### WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT BEING A MATSOL MEMBER?

Being a MATSOL member gives me access to the most up-to-date pedagogical developments in the field and applications of novel pedagogical approaches in the region. Moreover, the community of MATSOL helps me to connect to like-minded educators and scholars, and this could lead to potential collaborative projects.

#### WHY DID YOU JOIN THE BOARD?

I joined the Board to support the MATSOL initiatives that resonate with me, i.e. to create positive change in the field of English Language Learner education and to promote excellence and equity in the education of English Language Learners.

#### WHAT'S ONE THING YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING ON THE BOARD?

One thing I enjoy about being on the Board is the continuous work that we do in different committees for our MATSOL community. I'm excited every time I meet with the Board members to discuss new plans, knowing that new ideas are on the way.

## MATSOL DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Please welcome our newest staff member **Chrissy Campos Howard!**

I'm happy to introduce myself as the new Director of Professional Learning for MATSOL. I'm so excited to be a part of such an amazing team and thrilled to be able to support professional learning for so many stellar teachers across the commonwealth.



I am grateful to have education experience as a teacher in pk-6 and ESL classrooms in cities across MA. I've worked as a literacy coach, supporting teachers to integrate diverse texts and literacy strategies that support multilingual learners in their rooms. As a principal, I worked to strategically outreach to all our newcomer and multilingual families and support our staff to value their lives experiences in the classroom.

I've also worked with communities, foundations, nonprofits, and municipalities on early language and literacy work, including informal education spaces in libraries and museums. I'm currently pursuing a PhD in the Language, Literacy and Culture concentration at the College of Education at UMASS Amherst.

There, I was able to support the Bilingual & Dual Language Endorsement and Graduate Certificate Program by supervising and developing educators in their elementary schools and in their graduate classrooms.

If you have questions about MATSOL's professional development offerings, please contact me at [PL@matsol.org](mailto:PL@matsol.org) or 617-820-5099 x103.

### **MATSOL JOINS HIGHER ED FOR ALL COALITION**

The MATSOL Board of Directors voted in January 2022 to join the Higher Ed for All Coalition. Affordable high-quality public higher education is essential to expand opportunity in all of our communities and create a more equitable and prosperous Commonwealth. Higher Ed For All Coalition is advocating for fully funded community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses to knock down the barriers that too many potential college graduates' encounter. For more information, see this website. [www.matsol.org/higher-ed-for-all](http://www.matsol.org/higher-ed-for-all)

### **UPDATED MATSOL MISSION & LOGO**

In response to feedback from our membership as we created our new strategic plan, and in an effort to keep up with critical perspectives in the education field, the MATSOL Board of Directors voted to update the organization's mission to "Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners" (replacing the term "English Learners"). Members will also see this change in the updated tagline for our logo. Thank you to our membership for helping us keep equity and asset-based perspectives at the forefront of our work.





# Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

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

- Advocacy
- Cape Cod and Islands Regional Group
- Community College ESL Faculty
- Early Career Educators
- Educators of Color
- Emerging Scholars Circle
- ESL Unit Developers
- Family-School Partnerships
- Instructional Coaches
- Low Incidence Programs
- Teacher Educators

## ADVOCACY SIG

The Advocacy SIG is excited to keep pursuing and working towards eliminating inequities in our schools. We are using advice from the book *Advocating for English Learners, A Guide for Educators*, by Diane Staehr Fenner, to support our efforts with action and growth in our field. Talking and discussing is where we start, but we are searching for the action steps needed to stand strong against resistance or reluctance to change. If you are tired of only talking about what needs to change... join us. Help us to create a more equitable education for our MLLs and to advocate for policies and practices on the local, state, and federal levels. Join us as we gain momentum and gather support from within MATSOL and also develop collaborative relationships with other organizations to achieve shared goals. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting! For more information, visit our web page <https://www.matsol.org/advocacy-sig>.

Steering Committee: **Kelly Mowers, Barbara Page, and Katie Peterson**

## CAPE COD AND ISLANDS REGIONAL SIG

The Cape and Islands SIG group began the year welcoming Kelley Doherty to

our steering committee. This semester we ended with an Open House meeting with the goal of narrowing down the focus of our group and determining the most convenient meeting times to maximize attendance. Through thoughtful discussions we decided to focus on connecting EL educators and administrators throughout the Cape and Islands and sharing resources that address our specific needs and student population. In further meetings we plan to discuss current service delivery models across the Cape and plans for sharing resources. We hope to build our attendance to include representatives from each Cape and Island district.

For more information, visit our web page [www.matsol.org/cape-islands](http://www.matsol.org/cape-islands) or send us an email [cschneeweiss@mpspk12.org](mailto:cschneeweiss@mpspk12.org) or [kdoherly@monomoy.edu](mailto:kdoherly@monomoy.edu)

Steering Committee: **Courtney Schneeweiss and Kelley Doherty**

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY SIG

This Fall semester the Community College Steering Committee focused on advocacy and equity. Our meetings involved sharing what we do at our schools, what our colleagues around the country do, and what best practices we can implement here in Massachusetts.

At our well-attended November 16 SIG meeting with our membership, we held discussions on effective ways to advocate for support and expansion of our community college courses and services across the state.

In the Spring 2023 semester we will continue advocacy to achieve our stated goals:

- A primary role in decision-making for ESL programs and services at our respective colleges
- Academic and transfer credit for ESL courses
- Full-time tenure-track ESL positions
- Equity and excellence for diverse student populations

For more information, please visit our web site <https://www.matsol.org/community-college-esl>.

Steering Committee: **Juanita Brunelle, Teresa Cheung, Clarissa Codrington, Eileen Kelley, Lindsay Naggie, Monica Rocha Antonin, and Anne Shull**

### EDUCATORS OF COLOR SIG

The Educators of Color (EOC) SIG is a collaborative network of educators of color. We meet monthly. Our missions are to provide a space for BIPOC educa-

tors with common backgrounds, interests, and experiences to get together, build relationships, support one another, and share resources and ideas. We also talk through the difficult issues that affect BIPOC students, families, and educators.

In the fall, Yuiko Shimazu and Lonamae Shand presented how ELL Parent Information Nights were conducted in our PreK-12 schools. Members discussed what has been working in their school communities and if there were any challenges that they experienced. We shared resources and strategies that are useful for supporting our students, families, and colleagues.

The common themes that we often share at our meetings are the importance of self-care. In addition to the stress from the on-going pandemic, many of the EOC feel burnt out from taking heavy loads on the DEI and initiative/advocacy work, being requested to serve various committees, etc.

Going forward, we would like to continue to support EOC by providing a safe space to talk, listen, and support each other. We also would like to create more opportunities for our members to present and share their talents and experiences at our SIG meetings. We continue to encourage our members to take on leadership roles in MATSOL and their communities. For more information, please visit our web page [www.matsol.org/educators-of-color-sig](http://www.matsol.org/educators-of-color-sig).

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

### **EMERGING SCHOLARS CIRCLE SIG**

Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is for international and domestic undergraduate and graduate students interested in social justice-oriented research centered around equity, diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. The Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is a bridging space for these students who are engaged in scholarly research and undergraduate/graduate school coursework. ESC SIG meets online once a month, on the first Friday of each month. For more information, please visit our SIG page <https://matsol.memberclicks.net/emerging-scholars-circle-sig>.

Our SIG had its first meeting on December 6, 2022. At this meeting, we introduced SIG's agenda including goals and purposes. We also discussed converging points of social justice work and decolonization efforts in research and teaching. We practiced the Land Acknowledgement activity with group members in order to normalize such statements in our ordinary social and academic lives. We agreed to create a Google Drive folder to share our presentations, publication opportunities, professional development resources, and research tools.

We also made a ranking survey to identify the teaching and research interests of our group members. The survey results have determined our discussion points for Spring 2023. According to the survey results, we will explore and discuss the

following topics: “Decolonizing Ethnography (January), “World/Global Englishes and linguistic racism” (February), “Race proxies in class and academia” (March), “Tips to sustain multilingualism while teaching (in) English” (April). In order to make these meetings more meaningful and fruitful, we are planning to invite some Emerging Scholars who are engaged in both research and teaching. We are planning to include some interactive activities to encourage active engagement among SIG members.

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

### THE ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS SIG

The ESL Unit Developers SIG had four monthly meetings in the fall semester on the 4th Wednesdays in September, October, November, and December (changed to Dec. 21). Approximately thirty members attended our meetings. As a result of member input, topics centered on a Newcomer focus for unit development. Thus, we began with a September discussion of “Unit Writing Resources,” looking at the new Collaboration Tool, the Standards Navigator, WIDA standards, DESE resources, MCUs, SEL, UDL, and UbD. “Template Talk” in October involved an analysis of a more user-friendly Unit plan template. “Newcomer November” found us brainstorming topics for newcomer units; and at our “Development December” meeting, we began the process of creating Newcomer units together. Join us in developing Newcomer units on hot topics that you can put into practice at your school! Questions? Visit our MATSOL website <https://www.matsol.org/esl-unit-developers-sig> or contact Jessica Pulzetti at [jpulzetti@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:jpulzetti@arlington.k12.ma.us)

Steering Committee: **Jessica Pulzetti, Liana Parsons, Kerry DeJesus, and Susanah DiMauro**

### FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Our SIG keeps learning more and more about family-school partnerships. While last year we explored what family-school partnerships look like in various educational contexts, this year we are learning from leaders in DESE who share with us tools, grant opportunities, platforms and frameworks. In November, Donna Traynham from Early Learning Team Lead at DESE presented the Fundamental Self-Assessment tool and led a group discussion. In January, David Davila, Language Acquisition Support Lead at DESE, will share valuable work shaping policies in family engagement in platforms such as the ELBAC and Newcomers/SLIFE. Please visit our web page <https://www.matsol.org/family-school-partnership-sig>.

Steering Committee: **Mary Jo Rendon and Craig Consigli**

### TEACHER EDUCATION SIG

The Teacher Education SIG has been busy building upon last year’s discussions

and work while looking ahead to new agenda items and projects. Monthly a member shares their current or past work for inspiration, exploration, and advancement. Karen Terrell <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Karen-Terrell> shared her current work in math education for ELs which has had impacts in research and the field. Throughout the fall we have based our discussions on responsiveness to partners in the PK-12 field and in teacher preparation. This included the following topics and discussions:

- How teacher preparation may be impacted by the new MA Early Literacy Best Practices <https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/topresources/default.html> and the findings of recent reports of literacy achievement in MA.
- Teacher preparation and the advancement of the work of the Seal of Biliteracy.
- High school teacher education to diversify the teacher pipeline.
- Impacts of WIDA 2020 Standards on preparing new teachers to collaborate in educating ELs.
- Creating a statement with resources for DESE to demand a social justice approach to SEI in teacher preparation (and professional development).

We spent our December meeting discussing two recent papers: [Chris Chang Bacon's \(2020\)](#) "Monolingual Ideologies Massachusetts Sheltered English Immersion Endorsement: A Critical Policy Analysis" and [Bruhn, et. al. \(2022\)](#) Professional Development at Scale: The Causal Effect of Obtaining an SEI Endorsement Under Massachusetts' RETELL Initiative. Together these papers, other research, and plenty of data from the field are leading us to work on a report and suggestions for the 10th anniversary of RETELL, "Reimagining RETELL". We continue to populate [this document](#) with resources to broaden and expand teachers and administrators capacities to reach, teach, and advance ELs in and outside of schools. Coming this spring: In February we will have a book club discussion with Jessica Landers on her new text "[Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education](#)" (2022). Please join us on the 3rd Thursday of the month via Zoom from 3:30-5pm for more inspiration from the Teacher Ed. SIG <https://www.matsol.org/teacher-educators!>

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

## **MELLC UPDATE**

MA English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) is a group for Directors and Coordinators of English Language Education Programs in Massachusetts. The goal of the group is to create a professional community to support and guide EL educators in the administration of ELE programs at the district level through



collaboration and advocacy. Our meetings feature presentations by guest speakers, DESE staff, and MELLC members, and always include time for networking, collaboration, and discussion between MELLC members.

The first meeting for the 2022-23 school year took place online on October 14. The meeting started with a speed networking activity for members to connect and build community. Next we were joined by Sibel Hughes, OLA Assistant Director, for an update on OLA's current initiatives. Boni-esther Enquist led the group in a language development activity. Finally, the group engaged in small-group discussions about uplifting ESL Teachers. The groups discussed what school districts do well to uplift ESL teachers, and what we wished districts would do (more of), and then each group created a poster summarizing their ideas and advice. You can see the Uplifting ESL Teachers posters [here](#).



Participant discussion at the December hybrid MELLC Meeting

We were very excited to hold a hybrid meeting in December - MATSOL's first hybrid meeting and first in-person event since the pandemic began. About two thirds of our members elected to attend in person and the others joined us in a livestream via ZOOM, small breakout activities for both groups. After a short community building activity, the group focused on taking a deep dive into the DESE's new ESL Toolkit [www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit), focusing on the Quick Reference Guides on Best Practices in Key Areas. Members worked in small groups to review a QRG and then did a jigsaw activity to share key ideas from each document and discuss them in small groups by incidence levels.

Steering Committee: **Laurie Hartwick, Kerri Lamprey, Wendy Anderson**



Discussion notes from ESL Toolkit discussion

# Library-based ESOL for Adult Immigrants and Refugees: A (Needed) Shift toward Multilingualism and Social Justice

**Minh Nghia Nguyen**

nghia.nguyen001@umb.edu



## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Massachusetts offers hundreds of free ESOL programs that are based at local public libraries (see Baker et al., 2017). Many library-based ESOL programs primarily serve adult English language learners with immigrant and refugee backgrounds by providing free one-on-one English sessions. Community-based ESOL programs including those at local libraries are important resources for adult immigrant/refugee learners with limited access to formal education (Canon, 2020; Shufflebarger Snell, 2020). However, these types of programs have been underrepresented and continue to be underserved due to the lack of coherent public education policy for immigrants and refugees in the United States (Larotta, 2017). This fact gravely impacts their teacher education and training.

To my knowledge as a teacher trained in one library-based ESOL program in Massachusetts, teachers for these programs are mostly native English speakers, are recruited on a voluntary basis, with no required prior teaching experience, and receive minimal training (e.g., 12 hours) and/or occasional workshops. When matched with students, teachers are required to commit to volunteer for a certain amount of time (e.g., two hours per week for one year).

Reflecting on my experience, we were provided with in-house published guidelines for lesson plan designing during our training, a textbook for teachers: *I Speak English 5: A Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages - Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing* (Colvin, 2012), and multiple online resources. These sources, especially the guidelines and the textbook, served as the principal and sometimes only guidance for teachers, especially those without any language teaching experience.

In this article, I combine my reflection as a teacher in a library-based ESOL program and my critical analysis of the teacher textbook in terms of its approaches to how English learning is viewed, learners are perceived, and teacher training is conducted. The textbook is chosen as one unit of analysis representing other

instructional materials because in our training, both the in-house guidelines and training sessions mirror the textbook's content. Thus, it could be argued that the program's choice of this particular book suggests its uptake of the ideology undergirding the hidden curriculum of the textbook. In the second half of the article, I will recommend pedagogical ideas for library-based ESOL programs to design an agentive learning space for students that can lead to their greater investment in learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

### **SURVIVAL ENGLISH AND ENGLISH TO SURVIVE**

Generally, the focus of teaching-learning in community-based ESOL programs is on survival English – a term used to refer to basic English knowledge needed for someone to work and live (hence, survive) in an English-speaking environment. In our training, English proficiency was highlighted as an ultimate tool for one's survival in the United States while learners' knowledge and lived experience were completely ignored. As an example, in the first orientation meeting, we were shown a video introducing the organization. A major part of the video features an interview with an 80-year-old Asian female learner and a middle-aged American white female teacher. In the interview, the Asian woman with a shaking voice, glossy eyes, sometimes looking at her notes, nervously states, "before I learn English, I have many problems." Recounting a racialized experience in the hospital, she confides, "I'm afraid to open my mouth." At the end of the interview, with a big smile, she gratefully says that thanks to the teacher, she could speak and open her mouth. The teacher, sitting next to the woman, appears as a White savior, in my opinion, nodding and laughing along. She attributes the learner's success to her hard work. The final scene of the video features the teacher's message to people (read: Americans) to jump out of their comfort zone and help, and to learners (read: adult refugees and immigrants) to know that it is never too late to learn English even when they are 80 years old.

The video represents Orientalist discourse (Said, 1979) of (Asian) adult immigrant and refugee learners of English. Essentially, it is a deficit-informed view of them as pathetic, vulnerable, and/or incompetent subjects who need salvation by White saviors, represented by the teacher. Additionally, the video also reflects the instrumentalist discourse about hard-working immigrants. Such a discourse deems that immigrants' life struggles could be resolved by their hard work as if that quality and English alone could solve systemic oppression that shapes their reality as people of color in the United States.

Deficit-informed and instrumentalist discourses continue to be reinforced in other forms of instructional materials, especially the textbook. In the book, the discussion of learners' L1 is mostly absent or the L1 is described only as a hindrance to English learning, and English is presented as the only resource for the learners to navigate through life in the United States. Without English, they are unable "to

get jobs, to make medical appointments, even to shop or cope with life generally” (Colvin, 2012, p. 36). Consequently, the textbook delineates the purposes of English learning as a tool to survive and function in the country, get employed, obtain an education, communicate, parent, and secure personal safety (Colvin, 2012). It also expounds on common characteristics of ESOL immigrant learners that they “need friendship and acceptance, fear embarrassment, experience stress in their new surroundings, have responsibilities, are highly motivated, have widely varying backgrounds and needs, have difficulty pronouncing certain sounds, have problems understanding English speakers” (Colvin, 2012, pp. 38-39). The descriptions of the learners above are reductionist and mostly deficit informed. They lump learners into a group characterized as vulnerable, dependent, incompetent, and not legitimate (i.e., in terms of citizenship) until they achieve a higher command of English. Simultaneously, the textbook undermines other significant factors such as linguistic capital, heritage cultural resources, and rich lived experiences of adult ESOL learners. Additionally, it presents a myth about English literacy as an absolute solution for immigrants to advance to social inclusion, employment, and education (Graff, 2010). The myth removes the ideological structure of the society such as White supremacy, populism, and neo-liberalism. Those are critical factors accounting for deep-seated life struggles facing immigrant and adult working-class learners, such as racial injustice, discrimination, gatekeeping in education, or racial violence (Giroux, 2001).

My argument here does not purport to renounce the semiotic power inherited in English, necessary for immigrants and newcomers to obtain and appropriate. Neither do I intend to deny the important contribution of ESOL library-based programs for free and accessible English literacy education for racially and socially marginalized population such as adult immigrants and refugees. However, as research has shown, a command of English is not the absolute and only hallmark to judge and predict how those learners navigate and advance in a new country (e.g., Dao, 2019; LeBlanc, 2017; Nguyen, 2012). Their navigational and linguistic capital plays a significant role not only in their mobility but also in social integration (Yosso, 2005). Thus, I argue that instructional materials need to be designed and informed by culturally sustaining pedagogy for learners (Paris, 2012) by acknowledging and embracing their wide range of resources. In other words, learners’ potential, not their lacking, should be at the center of the materials.

### **A PROPOSAL FOR CULTURE-CENTERED PEDAGOGY**

The analysis above indicates that the hidden curriculum of the program in focus is steeped in the instrumentalist ideology (Giroux, 2000). Many library-based ESOL programs foreground a student-centered approach focusing on drills to help learners use language in real-life situations. Meanwhile, the role of teachers and instruction is undermined. In response to that, I propose an alternative approach, namely a culture-centered pedagogy wherein culture, by definition, is performative and grounded in one’s historicity and subjectivity. From this perspective, we perform culture through our use of language and semiotic systems

such as gesture, dancing, arts, and manners. We act upon culture when interacting with others to strategically use cultural resources, draw a distinction, benefit from them, and advance our interests (Kramsch, 2014).

Thus, in this pedagogy, the teacher's role is profoundly significant to acknowledge and value learners' culture in order to nurture and develop their identities including cultural identity. The goal is to undo the deficit theorizing of ESOL adult learners and support their holistic development of learning and identity. In the following, I recommend pedagogical activities informed by two frameworks, namely *Funds of Knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) and *Funds of Identity* (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).

### FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE AND FUNDS OF IDENTITY

Funds of Knowledge (FoK) refers to historically accumulated knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of a household and an individual (Moll et al., 1992). The concept rests on the premise that all individuals develop bodies of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, abilities, and resources based on their lived experiences such as immigration histories, occupation, or religion. In a language class, a focus on learners' FoK should include, but not be limited to, their multilingual practices and multiliteracy (The New London Group, 1996). This needs to be exercised with an explicit acknowledgment of the linguistic and cultural capital of the learner, for example, their L1, translanguaging practices, oral traditions, and diverse cultural standpoints. The purpose of learning should not be constrained within the instrumentalist realm (e.g., employability) but rather leverage learners' linguistic and cultural repertoires and support them to become independent learners.

Funds of Identity (Fol) are "the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31). The concept of Fol is developed from FoK because the learners appropriate and use their FoK to self-identify and reflect on who they are and are becoming based on their lived experiences. Thus, teachers need to be aware of learners' FoK to design and connect a curriculum to their culture, identity, and experience.

### RECOMMENDED PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES

To gather students' FoK, the teacher can ask the learner to bring cultural artifacts that they feel strongly resonant with their identity. The teacher should encourage learners to not only describe the physical dimension of the object but deliberate on its social-cultural and personal and emotional meanings to them (Subero et al., 2015). Additionally, home visits could be significant for teachers to gain insights into the social-economic and cultural dimensions of the learner's FoK in community and family settings. This knowledge can be and should be at




the center of the learning/teaching to develop the learner's sense of agency as well as support their social and emotional identity.

To explore the learners' Fol, research has documented effective methods such as self-portraits (Saubich & Esteban, 2011), identity drawing (Ordoñez et al., 2021), identity texts, self-definition narratives (Cummins & Early, 2011), significant circles (Moulton, 2018; Zhang-Yu et al., 2021), and poems (Subero et al., 2015). For activities such as self-portraits and identity drawings, the teacher could ask the learner to draw themselves or write on a piece of paper to describe who they are now. The learner is suggested to include people and things that are most important to them. For identity texts and self-definition narrative tasks, Hogg and Volman (2020) synthesize common questions for reflection, such as "Could you define yourself? Could you answer the question: Who are you? and writing down 10 answers to the question Who am I? and then placing the answers in order of importance" (p. 874). Likewise, significant circle activities ask the learner to draw circles on a paper on which they summarize objects, people, institutions, and activities that they consider as the most significant to them. The order of significance responds to the vicinity toward the center. As research has shown, these methods help teachers to uncover learners' Fol while engaging them in reflecting holistically on their identities and lived experiences.

**Learners appropriate and use their Funds of Knowledge to self-identify and reflect on who they are and are becoming based on their lived experiences.**

### **EPILOGUE: THE SHIFT**

In this article, reflecting on my experience as a teacher in a library-based ESOL program in Massachusetts, I contest the monolingual ideology of language and deficit-informed views of adult English learners. I also recommend alternative pedagogical applications that focus on promoting learners' multilingual practice, developing their transcultural agency, and engaging them in learning critically. This pedagogy essentially requires a shift in teachers' stance on multilingualism and culture toward social justice and diversity (García et al., 2017). Only then, teachers can negotiate and appropriate existing power relation with learners while establishing trust and conviviality with them. It is also critical for teachers to revoke their identity as knowledge owners of standard-English speakers. More crucially, they need to acknowledge and encourage the learners' multilingual identity in their unique and dynamic linguistic repertoire. By shifting gears, teachers can transform the teaching-learning into a safe and inclusive space for their learners and themselves. 

## REFERENCES

- Baker, C. D., Polito, K. E., Sudders, M., & Truong, M. (2017).** *English language resource Directory*. Office For Refugees & Immigrants.
- Canon, C. (2020).** *The challenges and impact of adult immigrant and refugee volunteer ESL teachers* [M.A. thesis, Greensboro College]. ProQuest.
- Colvin, R. J. (2012).** *I speak English 5: A guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages - listening, speaking, reading, writing*. New Reader Press.
- Cummins, J., & Early, M. (Eds.). (2011).** *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Trentham Books.
- Dao, N. (2019).** Transnational Vietnamese: Language practices, new literacies, and redefinition of the “American dream.” *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, 14(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1175>
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015).** *Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics*. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000191>
- Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L. C. (2014).** Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X13515934>
- García, O., Johnson, S. I., & Seltzer, K. (2017).** *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Caslon.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001).** *Theory and resistance in education towards a pedagogy for the opposition* (Revised and Expanded, pp. 205–231). Bergin & Garvey.
- Graff, H. J. (2010).** The literacy myth at thirty. *Journal of Social History*, 43(3), 635–661.
- Hogg, L., & Volman, M. (2020).** A synthesis of funds of identity research: Purposes, tools, pedagogical approaches, and outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(6), 862–895. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320964205>
- Kramsch, C. (2014).** Language and culture. *AILA Review*, 27, 30–55. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.27.02kra>
- Larrotta, C. (2017).** Immigrants to the United States and adult education services. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 155, 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20241>
- LeBlanc, R. J. (2017).** Literacy rituals in the community and the classroom. *Language Arts*, 95(2), 77–86.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992).** Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132–141.
- Moulton, M. (2018).** Funds of identity and humanizing research as a means of

combating deficit perspectives of homelessness in the middle grades. *Education Sciences*, 8(4), 172. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8040172>

**Nguyen, H. H. (2012).** The multilingualing of a Vietnamese American in South Philadelphia. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics (WPEL)*, 27(1), 65–85.

**Ordoñez, D., Siqués, C., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2021).** 'The best way to learn language is by not doing language'. Incorporating funds of identity for learning Spanish in a shared education unit. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(9), 1259–1270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1551324>

**Paris, D. (2012).** Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93–97. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>

**Said, E. W. (1979).** *Orientalism* (1st Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.

**Saubich, X., & Esteban, M. (2011).** Bringing funds of family knowledge to school: The living Morocco project. *REMIE Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 1(1), 79–103.

**Shufflebarger Snell, A. M. (2020).** A dialogic approach to exploring culture in community-based adult ESL classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, 11(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.450>

**Subero, D., Vila, I., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2015).** Some contemporary forms of the funds of knowledge approach. Developing culturally responsive pedagogy for social justice. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 4(1), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.4471/ijep.2015.02>

**The New London Group. (1996).** A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–93. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.1.17370n67v22j160u>

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

**Zhang-Yu, C., García-Díaz, S., García-Romero, D., & Lalueza, J. L. (2021).** Funds of identity and self-exploration through artistic creation: Addressing the voices of youth. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 28(2), 138–151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2020.1760300>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Minh Nghia-Nguyen** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Her research focuses on literacy pedagogy for immigrant/refugee adult ESOL learners. She also does research in critical discourse analysis, classroom discourse, and multimodality. Her work is informed by interdisciplinary theories such as Sociocultural theory, Critical Pedagogy, Systemic Functional Linguistics, and Critical Discourse Studies.

# Language Practices of Bilingual Students and Their Teacher in an Urban SEI Classroom: Translanguaging in Everyday Interactions

**Jocelyn Power**

powerj@chelseaschools.com



## INTRODUCTION

While bilingual education research has focused on language practices of bilingual children and adults, actual educational practices do not always mirror this. However, some teachers have begun incorporating bilingual language practices into their classrooms, a marked shift from the English-only models of the past. This shift in focus is promising, as it indicates a greater desire to not only understand but support bilingual students in their learning. The truth is that bilingual students have always used language fluidly and interconnectedly (García, 2009, pp. 44-45), despite attitudes and language practices that have historically assumed otherwise. When teachers of bilingual students better understand their students as language users, they are better able to craft instruction and classroom environments that embrace and build upon their first language practices.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the way that students utilize their first language in an academic setting that allows them these opportunities by encouraging or supporting first language use. It also analyzes the way that teachers utilize students' first language to support bilingual practices and understanding of academic content. The study attempted to determine the ways that bilingual students use language in a classroom setting when they are given the opportunity to use their first language. The research sought to highlight instances of first language usage and to determine how students are able to demonstrate their understanding of a concept using their linguistic resources. In order to conduct this research, I recorded a video of a typical math lesson in my classroom. The math lesson was in a rotating small group format, and I recorded for the duration of two groups, so I was able to capture data from a range of English proficiency levels. I then analyzed the recordings for instances where Spanish and English appeared to coexist in the discussion and attempted to find patterns within these instances.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The languages spoken by bilingual children do not exist separately but are in-

stead intertwined. Despite this, language is not always treated this way in many academic settings (García, 2020). Even settings that are labelled “bilingual” often treat both languages as separate. An example of this might be a two-way immersion program where students attend class in Spanish one week and English another week, utilizing what Ofelia García calls a monoglossic framework (2009). This practice is in direct opposition with the real-life language use of bilingual people, which is often referred to as translanguaging. Because translanguaging occurs naturally in social settings, it can also occur in literacy settings and be used as a pedagogy by teachers of bilingual students (García 2020).

Translanguaging can also occur within dialects or language varieties in addition to named languages. Li Wei (2018) describes “examples of dynamic and creative linguistic practices that involve flexible use of named languages and language varieties as well as other semiotic resources” (p. 14). This, to me, means that translanguaging can also occur among speakers who consider themselves monolingual, or those who might speak a variety of a named language (African American English comes to mind as an example). Understanding the research surrounding translanguaging can help teachers to utilize it in their own pedagogy.

Translanguaging is described by Axelrod and Cole (2018) as a kind of portmanteau of the words “transculturation”, the process of merging cultures, and “linguaging”, how users use language. In their study of translanguaging among young bilingual children, Axelrod and Cole described ways that children fluidly utilize all of their language resources in the classroom to complete academic tasks. The students demonstrated their understanding and skills in both languages by constructing meanings that only someone with their linguistic knowledge could make. This demonstrates how interconnected language is and how it can serve as a resource for understanding. Axelrod and Cole also emphasize that translanguaging practices can occur even among young learners. They state: “...for multilinguals, all language resources are utilized simultaneously, beginning at very young ages” (2018, p. 132). A common misconception among educators is that due to its complexity, translanguaging can only occur effectively among older learners such as teenagers and adults. However, in reality bilingual children participate in translanguaging practices even without having been formally taught to do so.

An important thing to remember when considering how bilingual children learn languages is that even if the classroom is not labelled a “bilingual classroom”, that does not mean that it is not a bilingual space (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Any classroom where students are utilizing both languages to navigate academic or social material can be considered a bilingual space, and a classroom where students often rely on their first language to access their second language is laden with translanguaging practices. The classroom setting in this study, though not explicitly called a “bilingual classroom,” contains exclusively



bilingual children who, by necessity, utilize both languages in their interactions with the teacher and with each other.

Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019) highlighted translanguaging practices that occur in classroom settings in their study of Chinese and English-speaking college students taking business classes. They identified four major practices that are utilized mainly by teachers to support language learning and understanding in the classroom. This study helps to provide labels for particular language uses that occur in the classroom setting. These labels are: bilingual label request, simultaneous code mixing, cross-language recapping, and dual-language substantiation.

Some of these language uses are the same ones seen in my own classroom, and it is interesting to compare how these practices occur in different settings yet remain consistent in their structure. In other words, translanguaging practices can look similar across languages, age groups, and settings. This study seeks to identify how these language practices not only help students to learn a language or concept, but also demonstrate understandings that a student possesses. While this study took place in a college setting and may not appear as relevant to an elementary context, the labels these researchers used to identify language uses helped shaped the way I organized my own analysis. It is also interesting to consider that language usage for bilingual people retains similar properties regardless of age.

## METHOD

The participants in this research were the students in my classroom. I work in a sheltered English immersion setting in a public school in Massachusetts. In order to be placed in the class, students must be categorized by the district as being at a WIDA level 1 or 2. The class also included newcomers. The students were in fourth grade, which made their ages between nine and ten years old. They were all learning English as an additional language, with the majority of students speaking Spanish as their home language. One student spoke Portuguese as her home language. It is important to note that I, the students' teacher, also spoke Spanish, though I was not a native speaker. The students knew that I speak and understand Spanish, and I allowed the students to utilize Spanish in class discussions and group work whenever they wished. However, it is important to note that because the students were in a sheltered English immersion class, the goal of the program was English proficiency and not maintenance of the first language. While I may have encouraged first language use in the classroom, there was still a pressure on both the teacher and the students to develop their English, which affected the use of all languages in the classroom setting.

I analyzed a math lesson about interpreting remainders in division word prob-

lems. The format of the class was three stations, each lasting twenty minutes. The students were grouped according to math ability and rotated through the stations. Two of the math groups were studied, one group that struggles significantly with math concepts and one group that tends to be very successful. It is important to note, however, that the students were not grouped by language ability, meaning newcomers and level one students might have been in the same group as students who were classified as level 2.

The data were collected in the form of a video recording of the lesson.

A video was chosen in place of an audio recording in order to understand other contexts of conversations, such as what the teacher was doing at that time, what gestures students and teachers were using, and general participation in the lesson. The video recording of the lesson was analyzed to determine patterns of language use. The language being analyzed was oral, some of which was in response to written questions. While analyzing student writing for language patterns can also yield interesting results, due to the constraints of the lesson type and the data collection methods, only oral language was analyzed. The students were a convenience sample and were my (the researcher's) own students. I gained a deeper insight into the context of the classroom as well as how the students use language to demonstrate their understanding. I was also able to highlight why I chose a particular linguistic strategy in my teaching, which may have mirrored the thought process of a student in a similar instance.

## RESULTS

Upon analysis of the video clip, three major "linguistic moves" arose, both on the part of myself as the teacher and on the part of the students. It should be noted that one of the major linguistic moves, an entire conversation in English or Spanish, occurred often in the recording. However, for the purposes of illustrating the heteroglossic nature of languages, only instances where Spanish and English occur in the same interaction were analyzed and deconstructed. The first major linguistic move was direct translation of a sentence, which Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019) describe as a bilingual label quest. This move was primarily done by me with two goals: one goal was to support language acquisition and enhance understanding by repeating a phrase in both languages in the hopes it would develop a correspondence for the student. The second reason I did this

**Any classroom where students are utilizing both languages to navigate academic or social material can be considered a bilingual space, and a classroom where students often rely on their first language to access their second language is laden with translanguaging practices.**

is to not alienate the one Portuguese speaker in the class. Since I did not know how to speak Portuguese, I was unable to translate sentences directly for the student, but still wanted to ensure she understood what is happening in the lesson by not teaching exclusively in Spanish. An example of this linguistic move is in the following utterance:

“How many groups of Shopkins can they make? *¿Cuántos grupos de Shopkins pueden hacer?*”

In this instance, I directly translated the sentence from English to Spanish.

I did this several times during the lesson, with some students responding in English to the question and some responding in Spanish. Whether or not the student responded in Spanish or English may have depended on how comfortable they feel with speaking the language, the difficulty of the task or question, or first language. However, the fact that they processed either an English or Spanish sentence and then responded in either language demonstrates the inseparability of the two languages in their minds.

Another linguistic move that was performed by both me, the teacher, and the students is the use of Spanish in the majority of the sentence except for the particular academic vocabulary being emphasized. This is one example of what Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019) described as simultaneous code-mixing. One example of this from the language sample is when I activated background knowledge by asking “*¿Qué es un remainder?*” (what is a remainder?). With this question, my goal was to emphasize the academic vocabulary word, remainder, while still assisting with understanding by using the students’ first language. One student demonstrated his understanding of the concept and question by answering entirely in Spanish: “*Cuándo quedan un número más – extra.*” (“When there is a number remaining – extra.”)

This accurate definition of a remainder shows that the student understood the academic vocabulary words, especially when this understanding was supported by his first language use. This understanding may not have been apparent if the student was not allowed to use his first language.

Another similar linguistic move was when I asked a question in English and the student responded in Spanish with the correct answer. This linguistic move also represented a way that students could show their understanding while given the opportunity to utilize their linguistic repertoire. In the example below, the student responded to me with the correct answer and I asked her to recall the word in English, not because I did not understand the student, but to reinforce the academic vocabulary of the lesson:

Teacher: [Student], what's the closest that I can get?

Student: *Quince* (fifteen).

Teacher: *Quince*, good, how do I say that in English?

A student responding in Spanish to a question asked in English demonstrated not only their understanding of the academic concept but also of the language. It also represented the intertwined nature of Spanish and English in the minds and lived realities of the students. While it is difficult to know exactly what processes occur in a particular student's brain during this interaction, the understanding of English and then almost instantaneous response in Spanish shows the way the two languages exist simultaneously in the brain of bilingual individuals. This act of translanguaging leads to important implications for how teachers might view and teach their bilingual students.

**A student responding in Spanish to a question asked in English demonstrated not only their understanding of the academic concept but also of the language. It also represented the intertwined nature of Spanish and English in the minds and lived realities of the students.**

The students, being bilingual and all sharing a common language, demonstrated translanguaging practices whether they knew it or not. One particularly funny and salient example was the strategy they use to find multiples in order to divide, which they lovingly call "*Señor Pelos*". This strategy was referenced by the teacher several times in the recording, and all of the students understood what the teacher was referring to when she said "use *Señor Pelos*". When the strategy was first taught to them, it was introduced as "the blob" that they draw a particular number of hairs on to represent the multiple (multiples of three have three hairs and so on). However, after grasping the concept and what the hairs were supposed to represent, the students dubbed this strategy "*Señor Pelos*", which translates to "Mr. Hairs" in English. In this way, they not only utilized their linguistic repertoire in creating a name for the strategy that would be memorable, but they also demonstrated their understanding of how the strategy functioned. This mirrors the way the students constructed meaning in the Axelrod and Cole (2018) study, where they realized that a direct translation of an English phrase about pumpkins would sound strange to a Spanish speaker and reworked their translation to make more sense – a feat that could not be achieved with a translation machine and can only occur when actual language users utilize their linguistic repertoire.

## DISCUSSION


Perhaps the most important take-away from this language analysis and accompanying literature review is simple: allow students to speak their first language in the classroom. Some teachers are hesitant to allow L1 use in the classroom because they are worried that they won't understand their students if they are using a language they do not speak or that the use of a first language will hinder acquisition of the second. Not only can the use of the first language actually assist with second language acquisition, but it can teach students valuable skills related to the use of both languages in the classroom setting and the world.

In their article, Axelrod and Cole (2018) mention that the process of translanguaging occurs naturally among bilingual learners and cannot be suppressed, the same way that a child might try to hold their breath for as long as possible, but their body will eventually force them to breathe. Translanguaging is a natural part of being bilingual. However, students can be explicitly taught how to translanguage to do it more proficiently. As Axelrod and Cole state: "That is to say, even though multilingual individuals will naturally employ all of their linguistic resources, even when opportunities are denied and such usage is discouraged, translanguaging skills benefit from practice and instruction" (2018, pp. 132-133). They stress the importance of a translanguaging pedagogy, also mentioned by Creese and Blackledge (2010), which includes direct instruction on how students' languages are different from one another, how they can use both languages to support their learning, and how languages can be used in certain instances to communicate with a particular group in a nuanced way.

A translanguaging pedagogy is a way for students to gain agency and power

**Some teachers are hesitant to allow L1 use in the classroom because they are worried that they won't understand their students if they are using a language they do not speak or that the use of a first language will hinder acquisition of the second. Not only can the use of the first language actually assist with second language acquisition, but it can teach students valuable skills related to the use of both languages in the classroom setting and the world.**



over their language use and learning. When students are able to manipulate their language in a way that gives them an advantage, they might begin to dismantle some of the systems of linguistic oppression that seek to hinder them. However, some teachers may find it difficult to implement a translanguaging pedagogy if they themselves have not had experience with translanguaging or feel overwhelmed by a lack of resources on the topic. This speaks to a need to teachers to be better trained at implementing this type of instruction into their teaching or need to shift their mindset from a monoglossic lens to a heteroglossic one. Perhaps more work needs to be done surrounding teacher understanding and instruction of their bilingual students, and this might be an area for future research on the topic. If more teachers begin to not simply understand the lived experiences of bilingual people but to implement these experiences into the curriculum, students might become more empowered by their own bilingualism, and the way their school and US society in general view bilingualism might eventually change. 

## REFERENCES

- Axelrod, Y., & Cole, M. W. (2018).** “The pumpkins are coming...vienen las calabazas...that sounds funny”: Translanguaging practices of young emergent bilinguals. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 18(1), 129–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798418754938>
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010).** Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching?. *The Modern Language Journal (Boulder, Colo.)*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>
- García, O. (2008).** *Bilingualism in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell: Malden, MA.
- García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2020).** Translanguaging and Literacies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(4), 553–571. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.286>
- Wang, & Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2019).** Translanguaging in a Chinese–English bilingual education programme: a university-classroom ethnography. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(3), 322–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1526254>
- Wei, L. (2018).** Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jocelyn Power** is a Sheltered English Immersion Teacher in Chelsea, Massachusetts. She recently earned her master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Massachusetts Boston. She has been working as an SEI teacher for 6 years and loves working with newcomer students. This is her first publication.

# Differentiated SEI Professional Development for Middle and High School Teachers

**Michelle Carney**

mcarney@argosycollegiate.org

**Monica L. Filgo**

mfilgo@argosycollegiate.org

**Meagan Hughes**

mhughes@argosycollegiate.org



**SUPPORTING ELS** requires a seamless partnership between SEI teachers and ESL teachers, who both enact strategic instructional strategies with the shared goal of increasing academic language proficiency. How can schools prepare teachers, who represent a vast range of experience and preparedness, to support ELS?

In preparation for our school's 2021 Summer Institute, a week of professional development for teachers, we reflected on recent staff surveys about professional development needs which revealed a prevalent theme: a need for differentiation among the professional development offerings. Many schools have a number of experienced educators who are proficient in enacting SEI strategies in the classroom; there are also teachers who are brand new to the classroom, and those who fall somewhere between being experienced educators and developing proficiency with SEI. Additionally, teachers of different subject areas and specialties need professional development tailored for them, allowing them to find access points for language instruction within their curriculum in relevant ways.

## ASSESSING THE NEED

In collaboration with a team consisting of evaluators, educator supporters, and curriculum developers (Principal, Assistant Principals, Instructional Coach, Assistant Director of English Learner Education, and Director of Academic Achievement), we considered our staff needs, determined opportunities for growth in

supporting ELs, and identified some high impact SEI strategies that we anticipated would support our teachers in better meeting the needs of our current population of ELs. As a team, we recognized an opportunity for our more *veteran teachers* to craft meaningful language objectives and apply some specific high impact SEI strategies to their lesson plans with purpose. We recognized an opportunity for our *newer teachers* to deepen their understanding of SEI, taking this understanding from theory to practice and being able to make planned instructional decisions. Finally, we wanted our *mathematics teachers* to increase their ability to recognize language learning opportunities in a content area where some SEI strategies have proven challenging to apply.

**Considering the proficiency levels and current needs of the ELs we serve was also important in identifying which SEI strategies to select for the most impact. Our brainstorm led to choosing the following strategies: 7 steps with Visuals, Partner Reading and Reciprocal Teacher, RAFT and Ratiocination, and Divide and Slide.**

Considering the proficiency levels and current needs of the ELs we serve was also important in identifying which SEI strategies to select for the most impact. Our brainstorm led to choosing the following strategies: 7 steps with Visuals, Partner Reading and Reciprocal Teacher, RAFT and Ratiocination, and Divide and Slide.

## **CREATING THE LEARNING CONTEXT**

As we developed this learning opportunity for our teachers, we understood that a “one-and-done” model - that is, one stand-alone PD session would likely have limited impact on teachers’ practices in supporting student learning (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). We were guided by the features of effective professional development, specifically focusing on the uptake of instructional strategies. In their review of the literature, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2019) found that “professional development that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content supports teacher learning within their classroom contexts (p. v).” Further, their review identified professional development as most impactful when teachers are positioned as active and collaborative participants, are learning within the context of their local classrooms, and are supported by continued coaching, feedback, and reflection (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). These features guided our choices as we planned for our learning sessions.

**PD Overview and Goals**

New teachers	Veteran teachers	Mathematics teachers
<p>Professional development for newer teachers was designed to focus on foundational understanding of the SEI theoretical framework, the purpose of SEI from a macro and micro perspective, an overview of how to craft language objectives, and a review of SEI strategies and the context within which each could be best leveraged. New teachers focused on practicing the implementation of 7 Steps with Visuals, Partner Reading, and RAFT.</p> <p><i>*PD for newer teachers occurred within two sessions.</i></p>	<p>Professional development for more experienced teachers drew deeper connections to language objectives and the thinking behind choosing academic language learning opportunities within the context of their lessons. The question: <i>How will students need to use language today?</i> was used to scaffold teachers' thinking about possible language objectives. This group of teachers focused on revisiting 7 Steps with Visuals, Partner Reading and Reciprocal Teaching. More time was spent in this session reviewing the RAFT strategy and practicing the Ratiocination strategy as well as discussing the potential for differentiation based on student need.</p>	<p>Professional development for math teachers created a forum for explicit discussion of the types of language used within a math context to support thinking about opportunities that exist to promote academic language development. Language objective examples specific for this audience and content area were provided as a resource. This group of teachers focused on contextualizing the potential use of RAFT, 7 Steps with Visuals, and Divide &amp; Slide.</p>

**WHAT, WHY AND HOW STRUCTURE**

Presenting to each of these audiences in a meaningful and consistent way was important to our team. Each strategy was presented to address the questions *What, Why, and How*, which met our goal of fostering clearer connections between theory and practice. We want our teachers to be able to purposefully choose the best strategies and academic language to feature in their lessons to support students in meeting their instructional goals. For this, understanding of *how* to enact a strategy is important, but not impactful without the *what* and *why* (see Figure 1).

## RAFT Writing - What & Why

### What is it?

- A writing strategy that allows scholars to write from the perspective of different roles for different writing purposes, audiences, and within different language functions.
- Creative writing, asking scholars to explore different career fields, ways of thinking.

### Why use it?

- Writing from different perspectives/viewpoints
- Scholars learn and practice different writing genres across contents
- Encourages creative thinking

(RAFT, 2019)

College. Career. Life.

Figure 1. Example what & why justification of a strategy.

## NEW TEACHERS PD SESSION 1

### Agenda:

- Do Now: "The Marlow" Excerpt & Debrief
- Agenda/Check-in/Objectives
- Context: Current\* EL Population & Language Proficiency Levels
- Reading ACCESS Score Reports - How To
- Introduction: Can Do Descriptors
- Can Do Descriptors - Now What? Next Steps & Differentiation
- Debrief/Closure/Final Thoughts

Our team determined that our newest teachers may need more background information about SEI. Our new staff includes new teachers who have not yet completed the Massachusetts RETELL course, who are coming from another state, who are pursuing certification through Teach for America, and have just graduated. In light of these facts, new teachers were included in an additional PD session focused on background building.

Starting with "The Marlow" by Dr. Kenneth Goodman, we were able to generate a situation where teachers, as readers, glimpsed what it's like to be in the shoes



of an English Learner. Familiarizing this audience with common language, relevant data about our school population (see Figure 2), the students they would be teaching, and tools to support their planning was foundational to the first PD session. This session concluded with an exit ticket containing the following questions to promote teacher use of presentation materials and relevant data in a meaningful way:

1) Looking at the Sample ACCESS Score report, identify 1-2 areas of strength for this student. How might you emphasize or push these strengths in your content area classroom?

2) Look at the Sample ACCESS Score report. What sorts of differentiation supports would you implement for this student in your content area classroom?

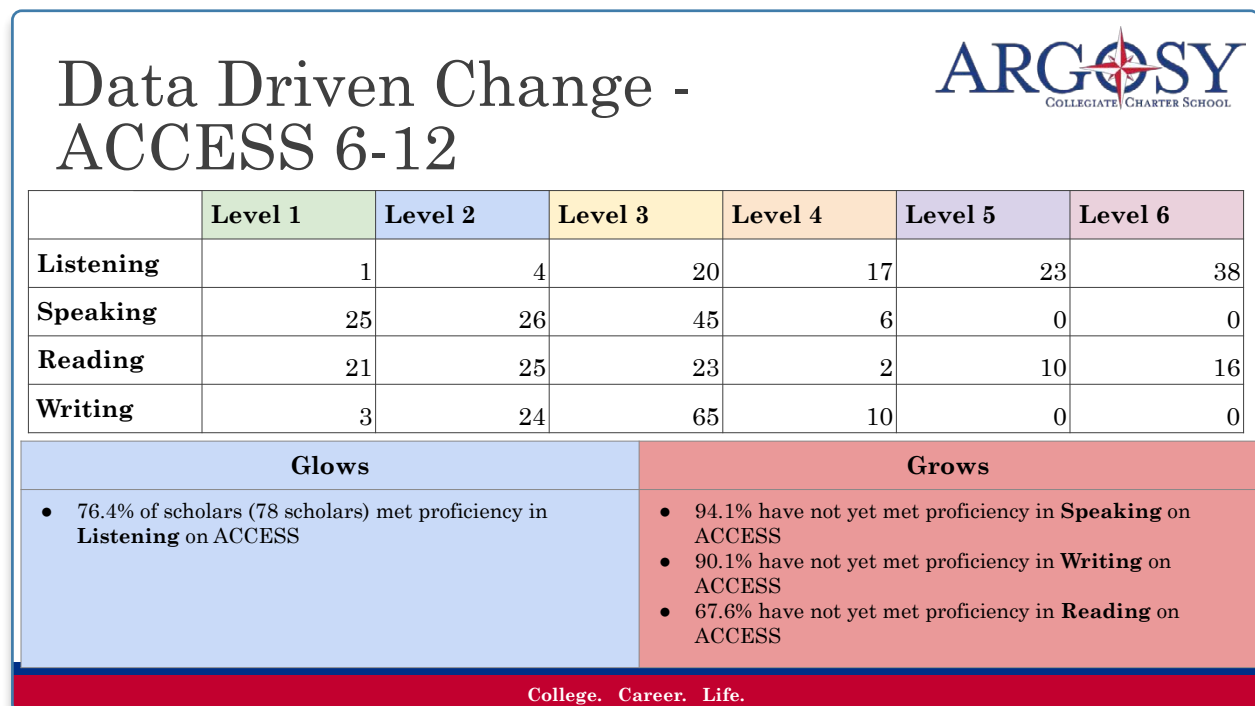


Figure 2. Summary slide of ACCESS data examined during the session

Identify 2-3 supports using the “Differentiation” slide and explain how you would adapt this support in your content.

## NEW TEACHERS PD SESSION 2

### Agenda:


- Agenda and framing our work


- SEI Framework
- Language Objectives (What, Why & How)
- Go through components of a lesson with embedded SEI Strategies
- Loop each SEI strategy after it is implemented
- How does this strategy support ELs?
- How might I apply this strategy in my own classroom?
- What supports do I anticipate I will need to apply this strategy in my own classroom
- Divide and Slide with debrief

The second session with newer teachers began with a brief review of the foundational information visited in session 1. We spent some time focusing on language objectives, but the majority of this session was dedicated to going through the components and structure of a lesson, and investigating strategies along the way in order to support teachers in better contextualizing SEI strategies and their purposes. The example lesson we chose centered on the topic of wind energy and the language of justification; we used an online article from the Boston University News Service titled “Turning turbines: Massachusetts and the offshore wind energy industry”. Our thought process behind the selection of this topic and article was to first introduce a local topic to newer teachers and secondly introduce reading material that could cross-over to different subject areas, including mathematics. Our slides included information for our audience, and also example student-centered slides as examples for what teachers might create in future lessons (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). We incorporated a whole-group divide and slide, including teachers from all sessions, as our exit ticket at the end of each session. After this session, newer teachers demonstrated the ability to draft language objectives and select and enact SEI strategies from this session for their lessons.

**Our thought process... was to first introduce a local topic to newer teachers and secondly introduce reading material that could cross-over to different subject areas, including mathematics... After this session, newer teachers demonstrated the ability to draft language objectives and select and enact SEI strategies from this session for their lessons.**

## Our Focus (Hum/STEM)





**Text: “Turning Turbines: Massachusetts and the Offshore Wind Energy Industry” by Mikayla Heiss**

---

**Essential Question:**

*Is it worth it to continue building wind turbines as an energy source?*

**Language Objective:**

*SWBAT argue the benefits or downfalls of wind energy using the language of justification.*

*L1: The data shows that \_\_\_\_, This is because \_\_\_\_, This is relevant because \_\_\_\_. This is significant because \_\_\_\_.*

*L3: Clearly \_\_\_\_, Moreover \_\_\_\_, Above all \_\_\_\_, Ultimately, \_\_\_\_.*

*L5: Perhaps the most convincing reason is \_\_\_\_, The (data/article) strongly suggest(s) \_\_\_\_.*

College. Career. Life.


Figure 3. Introducing language objectives from example text.

## How - 7 Steps - Generate

---

**From the Reading:**  
 “Offshore wind energy companies, which are now leasing almost 390,000 acres of oceanic waters near Massachusetts, mark a rapidly growing industry that was recently prioritized in Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s call for a Blue New Deal.

As an alternative to fossil fuels, offshore wind turbines **generate** energy that is carried back to shore by cables. With the global market set to grow 13% annually, about 150 global offshore wind projects will be completed in the next five years. In waters around Massachusetts, multiple projects are already in progress.”



**generate**  
/ˈjɛn.əˈreɪt/

See definitions in:

All  
  Electrical  
  Mathematics  
  Linguistics

verb

cause (something, especially an emotion or situation) to arise or come about.  
 “changes that are likely to generate controversy”

Similar:

- produce (energy, especially electricity).
- **MATHEMATICS - LINGUISTICS**  
 produce (a set or sequence of items) by performing specified mathematical or logical operations on an initial set.

**Word Roots:**

**Gen:** born, produced

**er:** to do something

**-ate:** to make have a certain quality

College. Career. Life.

Figure 4. Modeling a step from the 7-Step Vocabulary strategy with a word from the example text

# 7 Steps

## Generate (verb) - to cause something to arise, happen, or come about.



With a partner, respond to each scenario with the following:

Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ **generates** energy.

OR

No, \_\_\_\_\_ does not **generate** energy.

1. Sun beams or rays on a solar panel.
2. Ms. Godino's dog napping on her new deck.
3. Rainbows appearing after a thunderstorm.
4. Striking a match.
5. Ice cream melting on a 90 degree day.
6. Turning on a light switch.

College. Career. Life.

Figure 5. Modeling another step from the 7-Step Vocabulary strategy

## VETERAN TEACHERS PD SESSION

### Agenda:

- Agenda and framing our work
- SEI Framework
- Language Objectives (What, Why & How)
- SEI Strategies
- 7 Steps (brief review)
- Partner Reading with Reciprocal Teaching (brief review)
- RAFT
- Ratiocination
- Divide and Slide with debrief

Feedback from veteran educators indicated a desire to learn instructional strategies and “tweaks” that would be immediately applicable to the classroom. In this session, teachers experienced a less in-depth review of the SEI framework to set the purpose, but more time was spent on the measured crafting of language objectives and making sure that we were not simply planning engagement activities, but being purposeful in our selection of strategies and vocabulary to increase the academic language proficiency of our students. Language functions (see Figure 6) were an aspect of the deep dive into language objectives,

## How do we use language?

Macro functions	Recount	Explain	Argue	Discuss
<b>Micro functions and key academic practices</b>  <i>*these are not strictly bound to any specific category and may shift depending on how language is being used</i>	Classify Sequence Identify Name/label Predict Inquire Summarize Paraphrase	Cause and effect Classify Compare and contrast Elaborate Evaluate Name/label Predict Describe Analyze Support with reasoning and evidence Synthesize ideas and research	Justify State opinion/claim contradict/disagree Evaluate predict Analyze Challenge Agree/disagree Support with reasoning and evidence Synthesize ideas and research	<b>*ALL language can be used to discuss</b>  Build on own ideas and ideas of others Request clarification

### Language Function Toolkit

College. Career. Life.

Figure 6. Slide with Language functions from the veteran teacher PD.

and this session allowed for teachers to brainstorm, share, and discuss possible objectives based on a given content objective for the lesson on wind energy.

The same strategies were visited in this session as the session with newer teachers, with the addition of Ratiocination (see Figure 7), a high leverage strategy to support students in self-editing and revising. More time was spent discussing RAFT and Ratiocination as these high value strategies also allow for creative differentiation to suit students of various English Language Proficiency levels.

An example “student” RAFT (see Figure 8) was provided to this group, with a number of embedded writing mistakes. As a group, the veteran teachers discussed what they viewed as the student’s main areas of need in terms of support, and used that analysis to develop a plan for ratiocination. Teachers practiced the ratiocination strategy using an example visual code to identify the clues they had already found. Since this PD, this strategy has been observed being differentiated for students in humanities, especially English and ELA courses, where revising and editing is a standards-based expectation.



# Ratiocination - How

- Merriam-Webster: “the process of exact thinking: reasoning”
- Scholars closely read their writing in order to edit and revise
- Scholars mark certain aspects of their writing with different symbols or codes: circle, underline, put parentheses / brackets around, etc., in order to guide their close reading and editing.
- Differentiation is possible!

Code	Clue	Options
	underline sentences in alternating colors	-do not change -study the lengths of the sentences -if they are all a similar length, make some longer and some shorter -if they are too choppy, combine some sentences
[ ]	put brackets around the first word in every sentence	-do not change -if sentences begin with the same words, consider changing them or reorganizing sentences
	words you see repeated	-change repeated words to create variety
	-their, there, and they're	-do not change -change if you are using incorrectly -their: shows possession (their car) -there: location (over there, stop right there) -they're: they are

College. Career. Life.

Figure 7. Directions given for Ratiocination.

# RAFT Writing Example & How

**Role** - Engineer

**Audience** - public, people in Southern Mass.

**Format** - Letter to Town Council

**Topic** - Wind Turbines offshore

**Language Function** - Persuade

1. Debrief elements of RAFT writing - point out Role, Audience, Format, Topic, and Language Function.
2. Teacher models writing RAFT in response to prompt (provide graphic organizers/sentence frames/word banks as appropriate)
3. Provide MULTIPLE opportunities for guided practice.

Dear town counsel,

I'm writing to inform you of the benefits of instaling more wind turbins of the coast of New bedford and Marthas vineyard. The wind turbins are a good option other then using "fossil fuels" because the generate "clean energy". In fact, my company Mayflower Wind would generate "804 megawatts of clean energy to Massachusetts" if we are allowed to install more wind turbins of shore of New bedfor and Marthas vineyard.

Even tho their may be some people who don't think the wind turbins are a good idea and that there building would potentially hurt some mamals, the tempory noise is a small price to pay for generating clean energy and many of our companies such as "Bay State Wind" and "Vineyard Wind" are taking steps to protect animals while wind turbins are being build.

In conclusion, please allow my company to build more wind turbins of the coast of New bedford. This would give us all a much cleaner world and energy.

Sincerely,

Sally Sample

College. Career. Life.

Figure 8. Sample student RAFT.

## MATHEMATICS TEACHERS PD SESSION

### Agenda:

- Agenda/ Objectives
- Language Objective repository review for the math content
- Do Now: RAFT
- 7 Steps vocabulary
- Introduce essential question: Is it worth it to continue building wind turbines as an energy source if the mean downtime of a “traditional energy source” providing the same amount of energy is down 3.75 days per year? Defend your reasoning.
- Work time to find average downtime by wind turbine component, compared to traditional energy source downtime and make a determination based on available data
- Divide and Slide talking points on index card with word bank and sentence frames
- Divide and Slide with debrief

Based on internal, ongoing survey data, the overwhelming majority of staff name classroom simulations, followed by debriefs, as high-impact ways in which to learn and apply new strategies in their own classroom. Especially in math, where teachers often find more challenge with meaningful incorporation of language supports, it was important to immerse educators in a lesson that was aligned to state standards and not seen as an “additional task”.

The execution of three SEI strategies in the context of a lesson demonstrated how realistic it is to have a strong language objective (see Figure 9) and at least one supporting strategy within a class period. The math lesson dealt with the analysis of real world-data on wind turbines as a renewable energy source, and the extraction of said data in order to find mean downtime to determine if this was a sustainable energy alternative. The launch of the lesson was to pose the above essential question, and have students complete a RAFT taking on the role of their own eyes; they had to explain, in chronological order, how to make meaning of a graph. Sentence frames with sequence words were provided as a support. A brief turn-and-talk gave credence to the fact that there is no one best way to tackle a graph, but hearing others’ best practices gave everyone a chance to learn new strategies.

# Math focused LO Examples

SWBAT explain by comparing and contrasting data in order to communicate research findings.

SWBAT use comparative terms (shorter, shortest, longer, longest, bigger, smaller, etc.) to discuss and record measurements of \_\_\_\_\_.

SWBAT to compare and contrast two graphs by using comparative (most popular, least popular, most votes, least votes) and superlative adjectives (greater, greatest, smaller, smallest, fewer, fewest) and content specific vocabulary.

SWBAT analyze and discuss graphs by using content vocabulary (graph, key, title, table, X-axis, Y-axis, etc.) and comparative adjectives of quantity (more, less, most, few, fewer, some, many, etc).

SWBAT ask and answer questions about the process of \_\_\_\_\_ by using content specific vocabulary and question words (Who, Which, How many, Why, etc.).

SWBAT attend to precise language to model and explain the process steps of dividing fractions using sequential language.

SWBAT argue by analyzing the reasoning of others using the language of critique (arguably, despite the fact that, on the other hand, thinking about this in a different way).

College. Career. Life.

Figure 9. Example Language objectives in math.

7-Steps vocabulary was then used for the word *delineate*, as the goal of the lesson required finding average downtime for wind turbines in order to determine if this outweighed the average downtime of a traditional energy plant. This verb was then part of the divide and slide where teachers-as-students justified their reasoning to their peers. When looping the lesson components, our math staff *delineated* that having more of a focus on strong Tier 2 words is something to focus on further, as Tier 3 words often become the focus, but are rarely used outside of the classroom. Since this professional development session, we have seen a much stronger focus on this, with words such as *justify*, *outlier*, *reciprocal*, and *rational* taking on multiple meanings.

## THE OUTCOME

Initial staff feedback highlighted the targeted support and development of our staff who are at different points in their careers, and for math, the appreciation of focusing on a content area that is not always utilized for demonstration of SEI best practices. As the school year has progressed, our administration and instructional coach have been able to build on the foundation that started with this PD. We have observed, re-enforced, and showcased examples of these SEI strategies, strongly aligned to a clear language objective, throughout the district in order to build teacher capacity to support our EL students.

**Key PD Planning Take-Aways**

<b>New teachers</b>	<b>Veteran teachers</b>	<b>Mathematics teachers</b>
<p>While some new teachers have familiarity with many of the SEI strategies, it is beneficial to investigate the strategies in a contextualized way while revisiting the purpose and goal of SEI as a whole. New teachers can find challenge adapting strategies for different lessons and imagining how to apply strategies for various purposes, as well as write language objectives. New teachers benefit from being reminded of the resources that exist for them and how to access and use those resources.</p>	<p>Language objectives are foundational to ensuring that teachers are promoting academic language in the classroom, both as a planning tool and as an accountability measure for the teacher and student. Deeper knowledge of how to craft a meaningful objective supports better and more purposeful selection and use of SEI strategies. Proficiency in writing language objectives can be challenging, even for veteran teachers! Focus on differentiating known SEI strategies and adapting to student needs is a high-impact focus area for veteran teachers.</p>	<p>Math teachers do benefit when PD is targeted to their specific content area, as well as when they can assume the role of the student in seeing these engaging, high-utility strategies in action. Math teachers specifically can struggle to find the instructional opportunities for language in their content; interactive discussion in the context of a lesson can be helpful to take a different perspective on language. Practice looking beyond math to the functions of language can be valuable.</p>

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

Future professional developments centered in EL best practices are already in the works for the upcoming school year. One adjustment we are excited to make is that the teachers who were once the “students” will now be the ones facilitating these tiered levels of professional development. This serves to build and strengthen their own capacity to forward these critical, research-based best practices to the classroom so all students continue to thrive, and answer the need for more differentiation to support teachers where they are in their development. Just as students need varied and rich opportunities to interact with content, so do teachers. Another component we seek to add is video coaching by having teachers film an EL strategy they used that allows for collaboration and targeted next steps. **C**

**REFERENCES**

- Calderon, M. (2011).** *Teaching Vocabulary. In Teaching Reading & Comprehension to English Learners* (pp. 67-83). Solution Tree Press.
- WIDA (2019).** *Can Do Descriptors*. Retrieved July 25, 2019, from <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors>
- Carlo, M. S., & Bengochea, A. (2011).** Best practices for English language learn-

ers. In L. M. Morrow & L. B. Gambrell (Authors), *Best practices in literacy instruction* (4th ed., pp. 117-137). The Guilford Press.

**Carroll, J. (1982).** The language game: Ratiocination and revision or clues in the written draft. *The English Journal*, 71(7), 90-92. doi:10.2307/816683

**Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017).** *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Learning Policy Institute.

**Echevarria, J., & Colburn, A. (2006).** Designing lessons: Inquiry approach to science using the SIOP Model. In A. Lathman & D. Crowther (Eds.), *Science for English language learners* (pp.95-108). National Science Teachers Association Press.

**Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2010).** Introducing sheltered instruction. In *Making content comprehensible for secondary English learners: The SIOP Model* (pp. 2-23). Pearson.

**MA DESE (2018).** *English language learners: LOOK Act*. Retrieved July 15, 2019, from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/look-act.html>

**Burke, Carolyn. (1973).** The Language Process: Systems or Systematic? in Hodges and Rudorf, *Language and Learning to Read* (pp. 28-31). Houghton Mifflin.

**Heiss, M. (2020).** *Turning turbines: Massachusetts and the offshore wind energy industry*. Retrieved July 15, 2019, from <https://bunewsservice.com/turning-turbines-massachusetts-and-the-offshore-wind-energy-industry/>

**McCormack, R. L., & Pasquarelli, S. L. (2010).** Developing foundations for fluent readers: Phonological/Phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. In *Teaching reading: Strategies & resources for grades K-6* (pp. 37-67). The Guilford Press.

**Peregoy, S. F. & Boyle, O.F. (2013).** *Reading, writing, and learning in ESL: A resource book for teaching K-12 English Learners*. 6th edition Pearson.

**Reading Rockets. (2019).** **RAFT.** <https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/raft>

**Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., Orphanos, S. (2009).** *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. Dallas, TX. National Staff Development Council.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Michelle Carney** is Director of Academic Achievement for Humanities at Argosy Collegiate Charter School in Fall River, MA. She earned a Master's degree in Literacy from Roger Williams University, where she has served as an adjunct professor in the School of Education. She earned her doctorate from Boston University where her research focused on supporting teachers in implementing highly effective instruction.



**Monica Filgo** is the Principal at Argosy Collegiate Charter Middle School in Fall River, MA. She earned a Master's degree in Teaching from Roger Williams University, where she is an adjunct professor in the School of Education. Her ESL background uniquely guides efforts in supporting teachers to differentiate their instruction.

**Meagan Hughes** is the Director of Academic Achievement for Math and Science at Argosy Collegiate Charter School in Fall River, MA. She earned a Master's degree in Teaching with a focus in multicultural education from Roger William University. This background strongly supports the development and execution of curriculum to engage diverse learners.

# Certified, but Not an Expert: Advantages and Limitations of Add-on ESL Licensure

**Jennifer Altavilla-Giordano**

jaltavil@bu.edu

**O**N SEPTEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>, just days before the start of the 2022 school year, Boston Public Schools (BPS) was still looking to hire over 200 teachers (Szaniszlo, 2022). As a former English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and program coordinator in Boston, I was deeply troubled by this news. Nearly one in three students in BPS is classified as an English learner (EL) (Boston Public Schools, 2021). Filling that many vacancies is difficult enough. Finding hundreds of teachers qualified to support students who are concurrently learning content and the English language is an even more daunting task.



Add-on certification in ESL is a possible solution. With the add-on license, teachers become certified in ESL in addition their primary certification in another content area (e.g., elementary education). Most states utilize the add-on license as a means of ESL credentialing, but requirements vary dramatically (Leider et al., 2021). Some states, for example, require only a passing score on a test, while others require a practicum and/or additional coursework. In Massachusetts, practicing teachers can add an initial ESL license to their content-area license by completing a 150-hour internship and passing the ESL Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

Some research suggests that the add-on license could be good for students, not just administrators looking to fill open positions. Studies have shown that students with teachers with ESL or bilingual licenses exhibit higher achievement in math and reading than students with uncertified teachers (Loeb et al., 2014; López et al., 2013).

However, I argue that a certified ESL teacher is not always an effective ESL teacher. The decision to pursue add-on ESL licensure as a policy lever or personal goal should not be taken lightly. In the paragraphs that follow, I outline the

advantages and limitations of this pathway to ESL certification, and summarize key considerations for administrators and teachers.

### **POSITIVES OF ADD-ON ESL LICENSURE**

**More Certified Teachers:** The most obvious benefit of add-on ESL licensure is that it widens the pool of certified ESL teachers. This, in itself, is important because students classified as ELs are more likely than their peers to be taught by uncertified educators, who have little background in theories or strategies of second language development (Gándara et al., 2003; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2020). The add-on ESL license ensures that designated ELs receive instruction from educators with at least rudimentary knowledge about language acquisition.

**More Flexibility in Staffing:** Teachers with the add-on license can teach a combination of content-area and ESL classes, giving administrators more flexibility in staffing. For instance, a high school social studies teacher certified in ESL could teach four sections of US history and one section of ESL. This is important in states like Massachusetts where ESL is a teacher shortage area (US Department of Education, 2022).

**Better Marketability and Job Security for Teachers:** Some teachers might appreciate the marketability and job security that comes from being able to teach multiple subjects. Boston Public Schools explicitly seeks out teachers who hold multiple certifications (Boston Public Schools, n.d.). Districts with high percentages designated ELs may be less likely to lay off a teacher with the add-on ESL license than a teacher without it.

**Greater Potential for Collaboration Between ESL and Content Teachers:** Content teachers with the add-on ESL license may be more invested in strategic collaboration with ESL specialists, which is essential to the linguistic and academic growth of ELs (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2017). Moreover, content teachers with some knowledge of language development may have a greater capacity to implement strategies used in the ESL classroom, which could lead to better outcomes for ELs in the content areas (Giles & Yazan, 2020).

### **DRAWBACKS OF ADD-ON ESL LICENSURE**

**Lower Quality Preparation:** The primary downside of the add-on ESL license is that it does not require any additional coursework (Reeves, 2010). To effectively support ELs in the content areas, teachers need to understand the linguistic demands of their discipline (Turkan et al., 2014), and must be knowledgeable about theories of second language acquisition and strategies that promote language development (Lucas & Villegas, 2008). They also need to know how to utilize students' other languages as resources in the classroom (Garcia et al., 2017; Kibler & Roman, 2013), and how to help students make connections be-

tween concepts and vocabulary from different disciplines (Faltis et al., 2010). Passing the ESL MTEL and completing a 150-hour internship does not necessarily signify that teachers have acquired that knowledge or mastered those skills.

**Perpetuation of Status Differences:** Contrary to popular belief, teaching ELs is not “just good teaching” (De Jong & Harper, 2005). Because the add-on license is relatively easy to obtain, it may perpetuate this stereotype and devalue the expertise of ESL teachers, who are already typically perceived as lower status, as compared to content teachers (Creese, 2002; Peercy et al., 2017). Indeed, second language instruction is frequently seen as “nonessential” and ESL positions as “expendable” (Peercy et al., 2017, p. 232), as evidenced by the fact that ESL teachers are sometimes pulled to address behavioral or academic concerns and are often not given their own classrooms (Peercy et al., 2019).

**Blurred Lines Between Content Instruction and ESL:** According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019), Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) requires Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) and ESL. State guidelines define ESL as systematic, explicit, and regularly scheduled language instruction based on WIDA language standards. That is, a general education science class taught by an ESL-certified teacher is not ESL. This distinction is not always clear, however, meaning that teachers with the add-on license may be inappropriately tasked with fulfilling ESL minutes through content instruction.

Given these benefits and drawbacks, here are some considerations for administrators and teachers about the add-on ESL license.

## **ADMINISTRATORS**

**Be Transparent:** Teachers who hold multiple certifications are being courted by culturally and linguistically diverse districts like Boston (Boston Public Schools, n.d.). Administrators need to be transparent: Do they want teachers with the add-on license to provide better support to ELs in the content areas? Or, do they expect them to take on ESL roles?

**Provide Sustained Professional Development:** It is not enough to provide teachers with resources to help them pass the ESL MTEL. If administrators want their teachers with the add-on ESL license to be effective, they need to provide sustained professional development about issues specific to second language teaching (Gándara et al., 2005; Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012). Teachers need to practice strategies in authentic contexts (Villegas et al., 2018), chances to learn from veteran ESL specialists or dually licensed content teachers (Santibañez & Gándara, 2018), and structured opportunities to reflect on how their language ideologies shape instruction (Chang-Bacon, 2020).

## TEACHERS

**Be Transparent:** An add-on ESL license can make teachers more marketable, but it also signals a commitment to working with designated ELs. Teachers should think deeply about what they want to do with the license. Do they want to work in a general education role with a linguistically diverse population? Would they be open to teaching ESL instead? When interviewing for positions or speaking with administrators about class assignments, teachers should be clear about their intentions.

**Continue to Learn:** Whether educators with the add-on license teach ESL or content, they should continue to hone their skills. These professional development opportunities can be job-embedded, such as co-teaching or instructional coaching. They can also include engaging in virtual workshops or webinars through the WIDA Consortium or Center for Applied Linguistics. Newly licensed ESL teachers might reap greater benefits from those online resources if they seek out opportunities to debrief with colleagues during common planning time or department meetings (Penner-Williams et al., 2017).

In theory, the add-on license seems like a cheap, effective antidote to the ESL teacher shortage. In reality, the add-on license is only a Band-Aid. To actually improve outcomes for designated ELs, we need stronger medicine: clear job expectations for teachers with the add-on ESL license and high-quality, sustained professional development about strategies for supporting multilingual learners. **C**

## REFERENCES

- Bacon, C. K. (2020).** "It's not really my job": A mixed methods framework for language ideologies, monolingualism, and teaching emergent bilingual learners. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 71 (2), 172-187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118783188>
- Boston Public Schools (n.d.).** *Applying to the district priority pool: The cheat sheet.* Boston, MA. <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/313/DistrictPoolCheatSheet.pdf>
- Boston Public Schools (2021).** *Boston public schools at a glance.* <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/187/BPS%20at%20a%20Glance%202021-2022.pdf>
- Creese, A. (2002).** The discursive construction of power in teacher partnerships: Language and subject specialists in mainstream schools. *Tesol Quarterly*, 36(4), 597-616. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588242>
- De Jong, E. J., & Harper, C. A. (2005).** Preparing mainstream teachers for English-language learners: Is being a good teacher good enough?. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32(2), 101-124. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478724>
- Dove, M. G., & Honigsfeld, A. (2017).** *Co-teaching for English learners: A guide to collaborative planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection.* Corwin Press.
- Faltis, C., Arias, M. B., & Ramírez-Marín, F. (2010).** Identifying relevant compe-



- tencies for secondary teachers of English learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 33(3), 307-328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2010.529350>
- Gándara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Driscoll, A. (2005).** Listening to teachers of English language learners: A survey of California teachers' challenges, experiences, and professional development needs. *The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning*. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6430628z>
- Gándara, P., Rumberger, R., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Callahan, R. (2003).** English learners in California schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11, 36. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v11n36.2003>
- García, O., Johnson, S. I., Seltzer, K., & Valdés, G. (2017).** *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon.
- Giles, A., & Yazan, B. (2020).** "You're not an island": A middle grades language arts teacher's changed perceptions in ESL and content teachers' collaboration. *RMLE Online*, 43(3), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2020.1724045>
- Kibler, A. K., & Roman, D. (2013).** Insights into professional development for teachers of English language learners: A focus on using students' native languages in the classroom. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 36(2), 187-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2013.820226>
- Loeb, S., Soland, J., & Fox, L. (2014).** Is a good teacher a good teacher for all? Comparing value-added of teachers with their English learners and non-English learners. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(4), 457-475. <https://doi.org/10.3102/016237371452778>
- López, F., Scanlan, M., & Gundrum, B. (2013).** Preparing teachers of English language learners: Empirical evidence and policy implications. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 21, 20-20. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v21n20.2013>
- Lucas, T., Villegas, A. M., & Freedson-Gonzalez, M. (2008).** Linguistically responsive teacher education: Preparing classroom teachers to teach English language learners. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4), 361-373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487108322110>
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2018).** *Adding a license*. Malden, MA. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/licensure/academic-prek12/teacher/adding-a-license.html>
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019).** *Guidance for sheltered English immersion (SEI) programs*. Malden, MA. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/?section=sei>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2019).** *2019 Tables and Figures*, Tables 209.40 and 209.42. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_209.42.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_209.42.asp)
- Peercy, M. M., Ditter, M., & Destefano, M. (2017).** "We need more consistency": Negotiating the division of labor in ESOL-mainstream teacher collaboration.

*TESOL Journal*, 8(1), 215-239.

- Peercy, M. M., Tigert, J., Feagin, K., Kidwell, T., Fredricks, D., Lawyer, M., & Mal-lory, A. (2019).** I need to take care of myself: The case for self-care as a core practice of teaching. In C.R. Rinke & L. Mawhinney (Eds.), *Opportunities and challenges in teacher recruitment and retention: Teachers' voices across the pipeline* (pp. 303-320). Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Penner-Williams, J., Díaz, E. I., & Worthen, D. G. (2017).** PLCs: Key PD component in learning transfer for teachers of English learners. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 65, 215-229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.03.014>
- Reeves, J. (2010).** Looking again at add-on ESOL certification. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(2), 354-364. <https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2010.222216>
- Santibañez, L., & Gándara, P. (2018).** Teachers of English Language Learners in Secondary Schools: Gaps in Preparation and Support. *Civil Rights Project-Proyecto Derechos Civiles*.
- Santos, M., Darling-Hammond, L., & Cheuk, T. (2012).** Teacher development to support English language learners in the context of common core state standards. In *Understanding Language Conference*, Stanford University, California.
- Szaniszlo, M. (2022, September 1).** With one week to go before the start of school, Boston scrambles to fill more than 200 teaching positions. *Boston Herald*.
- Taie, S., and Goldring, R. (2020).** *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2017–18 national teacher and principal survey first look (NCES 2020-142rev)*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020142rev>
- Turkan, S., De Oliveira, L. C., Lee, O., & Phelps, G. (2014).** Proposing a knowledge base for teaching academic content to English language learners: Disciplinary linguistic knowledge. *Teachers College Record*, 116(3), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0161468114116003>
- US Department of Education (2022).** *Teacher shortage areas*. <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/reports>
- Villegas, A. M., SaizdeLaMora, K., Martin, A. D., & Mills, T. (2018, April).** Preparing future mainstream teachers to teach English language learners: A review of the empirical literature. In *The Educational Forum*, 82(2), 138-155. Routledge.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Jennifer Altavilla-Giordano** is a lecturer of Language Education and director of the TESOL and Bilingual Education programs at the Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development. She is a former ESL teacher and English Learner Coordinator, who taught in Boston public and charter schools. Her research and teaching focus on pre-service and in-service training for teachers of students classified as English learners.

# Storytelling Program Amplifies Immigrant Voices in Falmouth, MA

**Cheryl Hamilton**

cheryl@stellarstory.com

**Christine Nicholson**

cnicholson@falmouth.k12.ma.us



**T**ELLING A PERSONAL STORY on stage for an audience of strangers always takes courage; however, sharing an immigration story in your second, third, or fourth language is uniquely impressive. On April 14, 2022, four middle and high school ELD students and two local educators bravely shared compelling personal experiences in front of a live audience at the *World of Stories* showcase in Falmouth, MA.

“Storytelling was interesting because it was a new experience for me and very different,” recalls seventh-grader Ana Luiza Da Silva from Brazil. “I thought I couldn’t do it, but I realized I needed to believe in myself, and I did it. I loved this experience!”

Held at the local middle school, the *World of Stories* showcase was the culmination of a multi-year collaboration between Falmouth Public Schools, ELD Department, Falmouth Immigration Refugee Alliance, and Stellar Story Company. With funding from the Falmouth Education Foundation Partnership Grant program, the project launched in 2019 to educate the public about migration and strengthen the community while raising the profile of international voices.

As an organizer with the Falmouth Immigration Refugee Alliance, JoAnn Fishbein explains, “Many immigrants have compelling stories about hardships they faced in their native country, about how or why they ended up on Cape Cod, and about their



A *World of Stories* performers smile after completing their performance.

struggles and achievements in the US. They may lack the confidence and ability to craft their story in a way that connects with an audience."

To overcome this challenge, the partners developed a multi-generational storytelling model that engaged the public and aligned with the ELD curriculum at the secondary level in the Falmouth Public Schools.

"In our grades 7-12 English Language Development classes, multilingual students are learning and developing their language skills of narration," explains Christine Nicholson, English Language Development Department Head. "By partnering with Stellar Story Company, the students learned how to take personal essays developed in the classroom and deliver them as spoken stories."

With extensive experience working with immigrants, Stellar's Director Cheryl Hamilton began leading in-person storytelling workshops in the community and schools in 2019. During the sessions, students and adults explored how to identify and craft stories on themes of belonging, culture, and respect. Unfortunately, the pandemic caused the program to be suspended until the fall of 2021 when Hamilton returned to teaching workshops in the classroom and coaching storytellers individually via zoom for the showcase.

"What I appreciate about this particular collaboration was the connection with the ELD teachers. Beyond collaborating on the stories, we worked in tandem to support the students who volunteered for the showcase. I don't know who was more excited about their performances - them or me," recalls Hamilton.

### Story Excerpt: Ana Luiza

*"My family and I were at the Miami airport, and we were running about five minutes late, but we were not worried because the door [to the gate] was still open. We were all talking in Portuguese when all of a sudden, we heard this woman behind the counter say, 'You came to the United States. You have to speak English now, not another language.'*

*When my whole family heard this comment, it hurt so much because it is not a very nice thing to say to someone. Some of my family started to argue with the workers because she said this. They have to understand that they have to be respectful, not only of my family but of everyone. The airport is full of people from many different countries.*

*Later they told us we could not enter the airplane because we were the ones being disrespectful. I remember I was holding my baby brother in my arms. Everyone was looking at us. It was so embarrassing.*

*Later the manager called the big head of the company, and my family explained what happened and how they were being so disrespectful. The head of the company apologized and said it would never happen again. When we arrived in Boston, I felt a little sad because it's not nice to speak to people that way; it's disrespectful. Also, I think it's nice to be able to speak more than one language like I do."*



While all the students in the ELD classrooms worked on stories, the showcase featured four from Brazil, China, Columbia, and Turkey. Falmouth's Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Henri St. Julien from Haiti, and Vivanie Alameda, a Bridgewater State University intern from Brazil, also told stories. Theresa Okokon, the host of *Stories from the Stage*, joined as a special guest. *Stories from the Stage* is a national media program produced by World Channel in collaboration with GBH events and Stellar Story Company.



Ana Luiza Da Silva rehearses her story online with Cheryl Hamilton before her performance.

As the youngest storyteller in the showcase, thirteen-year-old Ana Luiza's participation was notable. When she moved to the U.S. in January 2020, she did not speak English. However, less than two years later, she captivated the audience with her bright smile and a seven-minute story about an experience with anti-immigrant bias told in her new language.

A 9th-grade student Xinyu Liu from China did not know what to expect when she volunteered for the program, but after participating said, "This will benefit me for a lifetime."



Xinyu Liu entertains the audience with her immigration from China.


"None of us knew exactly what to expect with this project, especially given the impact of the pandemic, but I continue to be inspired by all the different outcomes. Since the showcase, they have performed at a School Committee meeting and local festivals. It has truly had a community impact which was always our hope," notes Nicholson. "The stories are so thoughtful and share powerful messages."

## UNPACK STORIES OF MIGRATION AT YOUR SCHOOL

The partners in Falmouth attribute the program's success to the close collaboration between school administrators, ESL educators, storytelling experts, and com-



Cheryl Hamilton leads a storytelling workshop with Falmouth residents at the local public library.

munity volunteers. For example, ELD teachers developed narrative language curriculum units to ensure students had the language skills to express their ideas, while Stellar Story Company helped students develop the confidence to tell their stories in workshops and online coaching sessions. To learn how to develop a comprehensive storytelling program, contact Cheryl Hamilton at [cheryl@stellar-story.com](mailto:cheryl@stellar-story.com). 

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Cheryl Hamilton** has devoted her career to advancing more inclusive communities and storytelling. She is the founder and director of Stellar Story Company, a Boston-based business that helps people and institutions deliver extraordinary stories and unforgettable events that lead to meaningful change.

**Christine Nicholson** is the English Language Development (ELD) Department Head for Falmouth Public Schools. She began her twenty-year career in education as a Pre-K and elementary school teacher before shifting to the field of ESL. In her role at Falmouth Public Schools, Christine is responsible for the ELD curriculum development and instruction for grades PreK-12 and professional development for ELD teachers.



# A is for Bee: An Alphabet Book in Translation

by Ellen Heck Levine Querido (June 14, 2022), 40 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1646141272

## Reviewed by Mairead Mazan

**L**IKE MOST TEACHERS, I am on a constant hunt for the best books for my classroom. So when *A is for Bee* by Ellen Heck found its way to me, I was excited. In a classroom with a dozen different languages represented, the concept of a multilingual book for ALL students seemed almost impossible: but here it was!

Before reading with the students I reviewed the book and my initial enthusiastic reaction was warranted. Hunt uses 68 different languages throughout the book. She highlights common languages like Mandarin, as well as languages with few native speakers like Irish. I was also thrilled to see the addition of languages from indigenous groups around the world like Māori, Quechua, and Tlingit.


A clear glossary in the back allowed me to identify all the languages used and where I could find them so I could plan ahead to highlight languages spoken by students in my classroom. But without a doubt my favorite resource Hunt provides is a website <https://www.levinequerido.com/aisforbee> where native speakers pronounce the words from the book. While not totally complete yet, this support allowed me to share the languages authentically with the students.

But of course the true test of this book did not lie with me, but with my students. Immediately upon showing them the book, students were engaged. They thought the title was funny and a few my Spanish and Portuguese-speaking students picked

**Students thought the title was funny and a few my Spanish and Portuguese-speaking students picked up that A is for Bee would include multiple languages since bee starts with an A in both Spanish and Portuguese. What was even more thrilling was to see students get excited about sharing their languages with me and their classmates.**

up that *A is for Bee* would include multiple languages since bee starts with an A in both Spanish and Portuguese.

What was even more thrilling was to see students get excited about sharing their languages with me and their classmates. My school district tends to turn to the most commonly spoken languages when, or if, they order bilingual books. So, when my Albanian and Hausa and Amharic speaking students saw THEIR languages, they were excited. And while some students did not see their languages, they got involved by sharing their own words.

In all, *A is for Bee* was a fun, captivating book for a multilingual classroom. As a teacher, I loved the diversity of languages and clear resources. My students enjoyed learning new words and found an access point to sharing their own linguistic ability. *A is for Bee* is a new favorite for my students and would make a great addition to any classroom! 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mairead Mazan** has worked in Boston as a Sheltered English Immersion teacher for five years. She is an alumni of the Boston University's Bilingual Education program and is currently pursuing her Master's in Applied Linguistics. She enjoys traveling, reading aloud to her class, and trying to learn at least one sentence in every language her students speak!

# Biography: A Very Short Introduction

by Hermione Lee. Oxford University Press (2009), 192 pages, ISBN-13: 978 0199533541

## Reviewed by Eileen Feldman

**B**IOGRAPHY is a genre receiving a lot of attention in popular media (“Hamilton”, authors Walter Isaacson, David McCullough, and Doris Kearns Goodwin). This semi-academic book, which is part of Oxford University Press’s Very Short Introduction series, analyzes different types of biographies (exemplary, realism and intimacy, warts and all, conservative solidarity, Victorian, post-Freudian, public achievement over private matters, fallen academic idols, public role in their context) and techniques (moral judgment, chronological, particular part of life, tone, rhetorical devices, beginnings and endings).


The author also examines the historical origins of biography (Plutarch, Boswell on Johnson, Strachey on Eminent Victorians, Virginia Woolf on her dog), relation to historical periods and fiction and/or religion, and criticisms of biography writing and author bias. This introduction to biography is useful for teachers and curriculum developers in a variety of disciplines as well as for librarians. The book helps its reader to appreciate the wide scope of the genre and the inherent interest people have in reading biographies to validate their own identities, find role models, and contrast or compare themselves to others.

The book begins by discussing commonalities among biographies. The following chapters deal with each individual type of biography and the critiques towards the genre. Then it

**The book is useful for teachers and curriculum developers in a variety of disciplines as well as for librarians. The book helps its reader to appreciate the wide scope of the genre and the inherent interest people have in reading biographies to validate their own identities, find role models, and contrast or compare themselves to others.**

discussed the various ways an author can tell a life story. At the end are references to biographies, bibliography, index, and illustrations.

The challenge in relying only on this book, written by an eminent Oxford University professor, is that it is Anglo-centric. Thus, examples from the genre in other Western and in Eastern literature would have to be supplemented. Also, lesson plans and best practices for using biography in the classroom are not offered. However, Yale University offers online curriculum units <https://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/index.php> that include ideas for biography, see 2021 “U.S. Social Movements Through Biography” and 2020 “American History Through American Lives.” Also, Lee explains her theories in a condensed format on both YouTube and in a podcast.

Using biographies in the classroom can offer important benefits. Development of vocabulary of character traits, consideration of context influencing the subject, and determination of which traits helped to overcome or empower the subject are important aspects of critical thinking which can emerge. For our students, books/online material on current athletes, entertainers, scientists, businesspeople, and government leaders can become sources of inspiration – or caution. 

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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

## **MATSOL BOARD AND STAFF**

### **2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

#### **OFFICERS**

Chris Montecillo Leider, President  
Molly Ross, Vice President & Clerk  
Mary Hughes, Treasurer

#### **AT-LARGE DIRECTORS**

Silvia Fomin  
Kelly Mowers  
Marianne Duffy  
Maira Greenson  
Anne Roberti  
Yuiko Shimazu  
Ivone Spencer  
Priya Tahiliani, Past President  
Lin Zhou

#### **STAFF**

Helen Solorzano, Executive Director  
Jason Fei, Program & Member Engagement Coordinator  
Teresa Kochis, Program Assistant  
Emily Graham, Registration Coordinator  
Chrissy Campos Howard, Director of Professional Learning

#### **MATSOL CURRENTS**

Johanna Tigert, Editor  
Reviewers:  
Sharifa Djurabaeva  
Golnar Fotouhi  
Nasiba Norova

### **Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages**

160 Alewife Brook Parkway #1201, Cambridge, MA 02138 · 617-820-5099 · [www.matsol.org](http://www.matsol.org)  
Copyright © 2023 by Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.