

Math

Ratios; Rates
+
Unit Rates

My students are all English speakers. Speak other languages at home.

This lesson is based on Robots and utilizes prior knowledge of division; multiplication; ratios; visual modes & tables.

Feedback 😊

In the content objective, how would you measure "use"? Is there an action verb in pass.

Welcome to the ROBOT FACTORY

6.RP.A.3: Use ratio + rate reasoning to solve real world problems
Content Obj: Use unit rates to complete tables of equivalent ratios

Task: explain how to use unit rate (value for one) to find other values in the table

sample task response:
• I found the unit rate by dividing 12 by 4 robots. • This equals 30 seconds per robots. • Then I multiplied 30 by the number of robots to find the missing times in the table.

I'm wondering if the lang objective could be more considered why include Robots

include examples of precise language

Looks like when they get to create actual robots or replace other

or you could use give them a response to use without a real

2. WIDA Standard: Math
Key Language Use: Explain

Looks an exemplar sample response?

expressive: Speaking/writing
Interpretive: Reading

Function: explaining + sequencing

Lang. Features: Sequential Language
content vocab; Cause + effect lang;

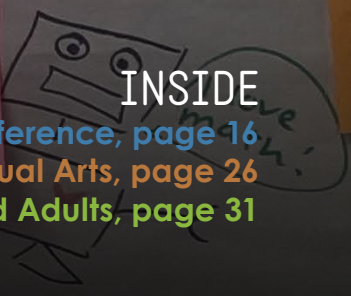
what is the precise language students should use?

Sequential language

4. Lang objective: explain in writing how to use division to find the unit rate and multiply to determine unknown values in a table of equivalent values using precise language.

5. Instructional Strategies:
think . Pair . Share
collect + display student examples
stronger + clearer each time

In your language objective, maybe include examples of precise language you want them to use



INSIDE

2025 MATSOL Conference, page 16

Bilingual Family Engagement Through Teacher-Structured Visual Arts, page 26

Developing Educators of "All Kinds" to Work with Multilingual Youth and Adults, page 31

6. Scaffolds
Sentence frames
Annotate problems
word bank w/ visual

ON THE COVER

Lesson planning poster from the [Train-the-Trainer Workshop: Enhancing Grade-Level Instruction for All Through a Multilingual Lens: Math and Science](#), March 2026.

matsol



Currents

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners

Vol. 48, Fall/Winter 2025-2026

Contents

MATSOL News

4 President's Message

Reports

6 Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

16 Report from the MATSOL 2025 Conference

Articles

26 Bilingual Family Engagement Through
Teacher-Structured Visual Arts

DR. JULIA (YULIA) STAKHNEVICH

31 Developing Educators of "All Kinds" to Work
with Multilingual Youth and Adults

RACHEL KRAMER THEODOROU

39 A Journey Through Language

NATHAN COUTO

45 Learning the Art of Teaching from a Multilingual
Third Grader: Three Modules ESL Teachers Need
to Know

MARIA A. GEUEKE

49 Mingling for Understanding: How Cross-Cultural
Events Unite UMass ESL and Veteran Students

DR. PAMELA A. SHEA

Reviews

58 Review: Truth in the Arrow, Mercy in the Bow: A
DIY Manual for the Construction of Stories.

REVIEW BY EILEEN FELDMAN

MATSOL President's Message

DEAR MATSOL COMMUNITY,

We hope that the transition to the new school year is promising, energetic and joyful!


As we move into the new school year we are wondering, *What does it mean to be a teacher in the current socio-political context?* While there are so many ways to answer this question, we want to draw our attention to the policy level. As many of you may already know, 2024 was the 50th anniversary of [Lau v. Nicols](#). If you are not familiar with *Lau v. Nicols*, this is the landmark case that laid the foundation for our current policy for the education of multilingual learners. Specifically, because of the *Lau* ruling classified English Learners are legally entitled to accessible quality education in public schools. Dr. Trish Morita-Mullaney - who was a keynote speaker at the 2021 MATSOL Conference - recently wrote a wonderful book, [Lau v. Nicols and Chinese American Language Rights: The Sunrise and Sunset of Bilingual Education](#). We invite you to check out this book to learn more about the families and communities who, like many of you have done, fought for the rights of multilingual learners.

When thinking about *Lau*, we want to emphasize that policy change comes from the **collaborative efforts** of many across the field of education and this remains true in the current educational landscape. The challenges and opportunities before us demand that we work across roles, institutions, and perspectives to ensure that our multilingual students receive high quality, inclusive and equitable educational opportunities.

From when we met co-teaching in a summer program, we have always valued the collaborative nature of our work and the benefits that come from working with other passionate professionals. Chris, as the immediate past president, brings the lens of a researcher and leader in teacher preparation. While Molly, as the new president, brings the practitioner's lens as a teacher, instructional coach and district administrator. Together, our partnership represents the power of bridging research and practice to ensure that multilingual learners thrive in every educational setting. Even more importantly, we have supported each other personally and professionally as we navigate through the celebrations and the challenges of our careers.

MATSOL is an organization that has always valued collaborating with others to work towards our mission to promote equity and excellence in the education of multilingual learners. This summer, MATSOL was part of a coalition of organizations across Massachusetts that successfully advocated for passage of the Protect Education Equity Bill. The new law codifies education-related provisions in Massachusetts law that previously existed only at the federal level, including the

right to public education for children who are undocumented. See the [Boston Globe](#) article about these collaborative efforts here.

We encourage all our members to focus on the power of working together to support the social, emotional and academic needs of our multilingual students in Massachusetts, as well as ourselves as educators. This issue offers articles on bilingual family engagement, developing educators to work with MLs, a journey through language, learning the art of teaching. In addition to reading these articles, you are encouraged to find a colleague to share your advocacy efforts with. Find a colleague to share your celebrations and challenges with. Most importantly, find a colleague to laugh and find joy with. 

In pursuit of equity and justice,

Chris Montecillo Leider

Past President

Molly Ross

President

The logo for ELLEVATION features the word 'ELLEVATION' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The 'E' and 'L' are stylized, with the 'L' having a vertical bar extending upwards. The background is a solid blue color with a large, abstract, multi-colored geometric shape in the bottom right corner, transitioning from yellow to green to blue.

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MATSOL Special Interest Group (SIG) Reports

MATSOL offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which are open to members.

Community College ESL Faculty

Educators of Color

Emerging Scholars' Circle

ESL Unit Developers

ESL Co-Teaching

Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

Teacher Development

Visit the SIG web pages to find out more: <https://www.matsol.org/member-groups>. Most SIG meetings take place online. You can join our E-lists to get the most up to date information on each SIG.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY

The Community College Special Interest Group held two meetings this Fall semester to focus on the following issues:

- To gather information about the status of community college ESL student enrollment and issues impacting enrollment in the Fall 2025 semester;
- To feature current curriculum projects that utilize AI in ESL classes.

The Steering Committee goals include the following items:

- To support students, faculty, and staff dealing with immigration

issues;

- To explore appropriate uses of AI in the classroom;
- To continue advocacy for graduation and transfer credit for academic ESL courses;
- To conduct an annual survey on the status of community college courses and services in our Massachusetts state system.

Following is a list of the Steering Committee SIG members:

STEERING COMMITTEE

Juanita Brunelle: Retired Professor from Massasoit Community College and Adjunct Professor at Roxbury Community College, Teresa Cheung: Professor at North Shore Community College, Eileen Kelley: Retired Professor at Holyoke Community College, Anne Shull: Professor at Quinsigamond Community College

EDUCATORS OF COLOR

The Educators of Color (EOC) Special Interest Group (SIG) is a collaborative network dedicated to supporting educators of color. The group meets monthly and is committed to providing a space where individuals with shared backgrounds, interests, and experiences can build meaningful relationships, exchange ideas, and offer mutual support. Through these discussions, members also explore strengths and challenges that impact students of color, their families, and educators of color.

A key strength of the SIG lies in the diversity of its participants. Members represent a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as professional roles within education. Regular participants include higher ed and K–12 educators from multiple districts, serving in positions such as administrators, lead teachers/coaches, and elementary, middle, and high school teachers. This diversity enriches the group's dialogue, allowing for the exchange of resources and perspectives across districts and grade levels, and fostering a deeper understanding through varied expertise.

Last year, the SIG collaborated on a project examining challenges and inequities in the identification of English learners, culminating in a presentation at the MATSOL 2025 Conference. During the 2025–2026 school year, discussions have focused on challenges related to ACCESS testing, as well as strategies for navi-

gating multilingual learner (ML) support and advancing equity through culturally responsive and compassionate practices.

The SIG will continue to host a networking session at the upcoming MATSOL Conference and warmly welcomes new participants to further strengthen its community. The group remains committed to providing a safe and supportive space for educators of color. Looking ahead, the SIG aims to expand opportunities for members to share their expertise and experiences through presentations at both SIG meetings and the MATSOL Conference. Members are also encouraged to pursue leadership roles within MATSOL and in their broader communities.

For more information, please visit: www.matsol.org/educators-of-color-sig

STEERING COMMITTEE

Yuiko Shimazu and Lonamae Shand

THE EMERGING SCHOLARS CIRCLE

During the Fall 2025 semester, the Circle engaged in five collaborative sessions centered on the theme “**Intersectionality at a Time of Social Change.**” This thematic focus was chosen to facilitate critical discussions regarding the overlapping social positions that influence language education.

PUBLIC WEBINAR

The hallmark of the semester was a public webinar held on **Thursday, November 13**, featuring distinguished guest speakers from the University of Massachusetts Boston. The session explored the complexities of multilingualism through two distinct research lenses:

- **Narrative Journeys of Multilingual Students** *Dr. Juan David Gutiérrez* presented a longitudinal narrative inquiry tracing the first-year experiences of multilingual university students.
- **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in Adult Education** *Dr. Minh Nghia Nguyen* shared insights from a 28-week community-based study focused on Vietnamese immigrants in Massachusetts.

PLANS FOR 2026

The group is currently developing “Embracing Intersectionality in Multilingual Education” at 2026 MATSOL. Members Nilufer Johnson, Damian Diaz,

and Lilunnaher will facilitate a workshop focused on the implications of intersectionality for pedagogical practice. This session will feature three ten-minute presentations centering on the experiences of immigrant, refugee, and disabled students.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Nasiba Norova, Aram Ahmed, Rachel Wang, and Wonguk Cho

ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS

This year, the ESL Unit Developers SIG has taken a deep-dive into using AI in curriculum development. We were honored to have WIDA's own Dr. Lynn Schafer Willner deliver a two-session webinar, which was open to all MAT-SOL members! In our March and April meetings, we are carrying this learning forward through exploring the utility of AI in curriculum development at the unit level and at the lesson level. We have had a wonderful year of growth, where we have challenged one another to explore new horizons as we strive to deliver the most effective instruction possible to our Multilingual Learners!



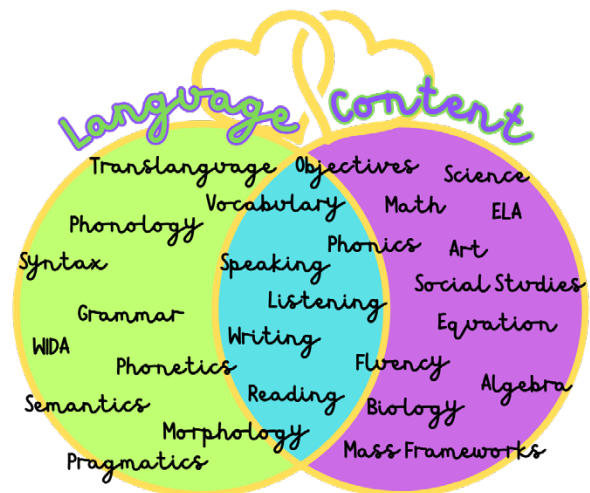
L to R: Kerry DeJesus, Viviana V. Martinez, Jessica Pulzetti, Liana Parsons

STEERING COMMITTEE

Jessica Pulzetti, Liana Parsons, Kerry DeJesus, and Viviana V. Martinez

ESL CO-TEACHING

The ESL Co-Teaching Special Interest Group (SIG) is a statewide collaborative network of K–12 educators committed to advancing high-quality co-teaching models that integrate English language development with content instruction. Grounded in the



2020 WIDA English Language Development Standards, the Massachusetts DESE Frameworks, and the Blueprint for English Learner Success, our work centers on promoting equitable and effective instruction for multilingual learners.

The SIG aims to bring together educators to review current research, exchange real-world classroom experiences, and develop sustainable practices for ESL co-teaching. Through shared inquiry, consultation of DESE and WIDA resources, and the creation of an actionable vision, we aim to strengthen instructional practices and influence school, district, and state-level decision-making. At its core, the ESL Co-Teaching SIG is dedicated to enhancing educator capacity, fostering professional growth, and advocating for inclusive and impactful co-teaching for English learners.



YEAR IN REVIEW (JUNE 2025–PRESENT)

Since June 2025, the ESL Co-Teaching Special Interest Group (SIG) has refined its meeting structure to better support member participation. The SIG now meets every other month, typically on the last Wednesday from 3:30–4:30 PM. This decision reflects our commitment to making engagement more manageable and sustainable for educators. We welcome feedback from members and encourage you to reach out if an alternative day or time would better support your regular participation.

PURPOSE AND VISION

The ESL Co-Teaching SIG is dedicated to providing professional development,

support, and guidance on effective co-teaching practices. Our goal is to cultivate a professional community where educators gain actionable insights into culturally and linguistically sustaining co-teaching pedagogies that enhance learning opportunities for multilingual learners. We aim to extend this impact beyond individual classrooms to influence systems and practices across Massachusetts.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RECENT MEETINGS

At our October meeting, we were honored to host Dr. Holly J. Porter, author of *Intentional Co-Teaching for Multilingual Learners* (2024). Her session explored how co-planning differs from individual planning, emphasizing the complementary roles each teacher brings to integrated instruction. Using the LASER Co-Planning Template, participants examined how to design aligned content and language objectives, with particular focus on the “L” for Learning Targets. The session was highly engaging and offered practical strategies for immediate application.

We also highlighted strong district-level practices by inviting Brittany Jenney and Jenn Oliveira, instructional leaders from New Bedford High School, to share their experiences supporting co-teaching partnerships between ELA and ESL educators as part of the district’s Language Acquisition Co-Teaching Prep PD system for ESL and ELA co-teachers. Their insights into building effective co-planning routines and structures provided valuable, practice-based perspectives for attendees.

GET INVOLVED

We warmly invite MATSOL members and educators across Massachusetts to join our growing community of practice. Whether you are new to co-teaching or looking to deepen your expertise, the SIG offers a collaborative space for learning and growth. For more information or to get involved, please contact co-leads Nathan Couto (nccouto@newbedfordschools.org) or Julie Miller (jmiller@newbedfordschools.org). We look forward to connecting with you!

STEERING COMMITTEE

Nathan Couto & Julie Miller

MATSOL ENGLISH LEARNER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (MELLC)

The MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) is a group for Directors and Coordinators of English Language Education Programs in Massachusetts. It is a professional community that supports and guides EL educators in the admin-

istration of ELE programs at the district level through collaboration and advocacy.

In SY2025-26, MELLC was overseen by a steering committee composed of MELLC members Wendy Anderson and Kate Lyons Mailloux and was facilitated by Mary DeSimone of Mountaintop Education Consulting, with support from MATSOL staff. Three in-person meetings were held on the campus of Fitchburg State University (with a remote participation option) and four meetings took place virtually. The MELLCs were generously supported by our sponsors: Imagine Learning, MAPA Translations, Flashlight 360, ReachMyTeach, and Fitchburg State University.

Topics for MELLC meetings are selected based on member needs and to address emerging issues during the year. Meetings generally feature a presentation by a guest speaker or MELLC member, followed by time for discussion, sharing, and “deep dives” into resources or policy documents.

SY2025 MELLC MEETING TOPICS

- Implementing the WIDA 2020 ELD Standards Framework
- Identifying and Servicing Dually Identified Students
- ELE Director/Coordinator Job Descriptions
- Instructional Delivery Approaches for EL Instruction
- EL Benchmarks and Progress Monitoring
- Reading Research and MLs

In SY2024-25, MELLC welcomed guest speakers with expertise on a variety of topics: Tyler Ramey, Enaltecer Education Consulting, on Implementing the WIDA 2020 ELD Standards Framework; Samantha Kodak and Holly-Anne



MELLC members building community

Neal, DESE, on Identifying and Servicing Dually Identified Students; Boni-esther Enquist, MATSOL PD Specialist, on state terminology and expectations for ELE instruction; and Claude Goldenberg, Stanford University, on reading research and multilingual learners.

The MELLC meetings also featured presentations from members on practices in their districts, with perspectives from low-, medium- and high-enrollment EL populations. Through this sharing, members had the opportunity to learn from each other and find out what is happening in different districts.

MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Thank you to the MELLC members who presented on the following topics:

ELE Director/Coordinator Job Descriptions

- Brittany Wright, Meredith Weiss and Johanna Fawcett: Resources for defining the EL Director/Coordinator role and tracking tasks associated with EL programs

Instructional Delivery Approaches for EL Instruction

- Maria Gutierrez Rey and Flor Then: Successes and challenges with co-teaching, push-in and pull-out instructional models
- Nathan Couto and Julie Miller: The role of school leaders in making co-teaching a success

EL Benchmarks and Progress Monitoring

- Kate Lyons Mailloux: Integrating EL Success Plans into existing systems

Family Engagement

- Kate Walsh and Kristen MacDougall: Family Fairs
- Johanna Fawcett: Starting ESL classes for caregivers.
- Brittany Wright: Launching an ELPAC
- Patty MacKay: Using culture briefs to provide information to staff

In addition to presentations, the meetings included time for small group dis-

cussions. Over the year, the group took a “deep dive” into resources for implementing the WIDA 2020 ELD Standards Framework, engaged in discussion of the impact immigration policy and advocacy, and collaborated to compare how the “ELE/ML Director/Coordinator” positions are defined across districts. The in-person meetings concluded with a buffet lunch and time for more informal networking and discussions.

Find out more about MELLC at www.matsol.org/mellc-k-12-directors

STEERING COMMITTEE

Wendy Anderson and Kate Lyons Mailloux


TEACHER DEVELOPMENT SIG

The Teacher Development Special Interest Group (Teacher Education) has been working across higher ed and PK-12 contexts to study and discuss the opportunities and challenges of co-teaching. This topic emerged from a fall discussion about the crisis for families, teachers, and schools in both addressing and managing ICE presence/threats and with a bottom line goal of increasing empathy and knowledge amongst faculty and staff about living in a multilingual/cultural world. As such, we explored ways to support teacher candidates in developing more culturally responsive classrooms. This topic focused on implementing these practices in SEI courses at the university level. Resources and instructional strategies were presented, discussed, and candidates were encouraged to pilot them in their classroom practice.

ESL teachers who attended the SIG expressed an urgency for a more consistent and present effort for all faculty, content teachers included, to help MLs feel welcomed, safe, and connected emotionally and academically. We tied these efforts to those that are evaluated in the [Performance Standards for Teachers SEI Indicators published in 2024](#) as this was our focus for the 2024-25 school year. Ultimately, the team landed on the topic of co-teaching, in its most broad definition as ‘active, sustained efforts to share planning, teaching, assessing for multilingual students’. Since January, the SIG has examined a few members’ schools’ efforts to implement institutional and practice changes in their schools that they call ‘co-teaching’. In one member’s high school, the ESL teacher and colleagues determined their own ‘co-teaching’ structure that included push in/pull out, SEI classes, where the content (English Language Arts) and ESL teachers rotate the responsibility of leading/assisting depending on the grade and content.

In other context, a SIG member is leading an [Early Literacy Consortium Grant](#) that has funded a cohort study of the [Honigsfeld & Dove's](#) co-teaching framework and monitored significant change in grades 3 and K at this school. These same K and 3 teachers, along with grant and district leaders/administrators, are facilitating a whole school shift from push in/pull out model to co-teaching for English Language Arts only and we are studying the slow yet steady movement toward shared responsibility of teaching multilingual students. This May, SIG members and colleagues from the field invite MATSOL members to their discussion on What makes ESL and General Education Teacher Collaboration Work? where we will bring in teachers and teacher educators who are forwarding collaboration as the way for ML student success.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Rachel Kramer Theodorou, M.Ed., Senior Lecturer in Education, Brandeis University Education Program; Patricia Garcia, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education, Lasell University 



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2025 MATSOL Conference

Méritès Abelard

THE Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL) hosted its annual conference this year from May 28 to May 30 in Hybrid format for the first time. The Framingham Hotel & Conference Center was the venue for in-person attendance. The conference brought together educators, instructional coaches, administrators, policy makers, and researchers dedicated to advancing the education of multilingual Learners (MLs) in Prek-12, higher education faculty, and professionals in adult learning programs.



The quality of the events explain why there is such a rush in early bookings. About three months before the conference, educators rushed to get in while many others regret not being early birds. It was all booked very fast. In fact, the reasons for the excitement were visible in the keynote highlights, the quality of

the presentations covering a variety of themes, and participants' impressions.

KEYNOTE HIGHLIGHTS

DR. CAROLA SUÁREZ-OROZCO: STRIVING TO BELONG: SCHOOL CLIMATE & SCHOOL BELONGING FOR IMMIGRANT-ORIGIN STUDENTS

Professor in Residence at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Director of the Immigration Initiative at Harvard.

Sharing her own childhood experience and her lifelong research and teaching experience, Dr. Suárez-Orozco explored the critical role of school climate and school belonging for immigrant-origin students. She discussed how school climate domains such as teacher relationships and psychological safety contribute to school belonging and positive outcomes for immigrant-origin youth. She shared emerging findings from her research

at the [Immigration Initiative at Harvard](#) on assessing school climate, understanding generational differences, and implementing practical strategies to cultivate inclusive and supportive school environments. At the conclusion of her address, she asked us to reflect on some key questions in our own work:

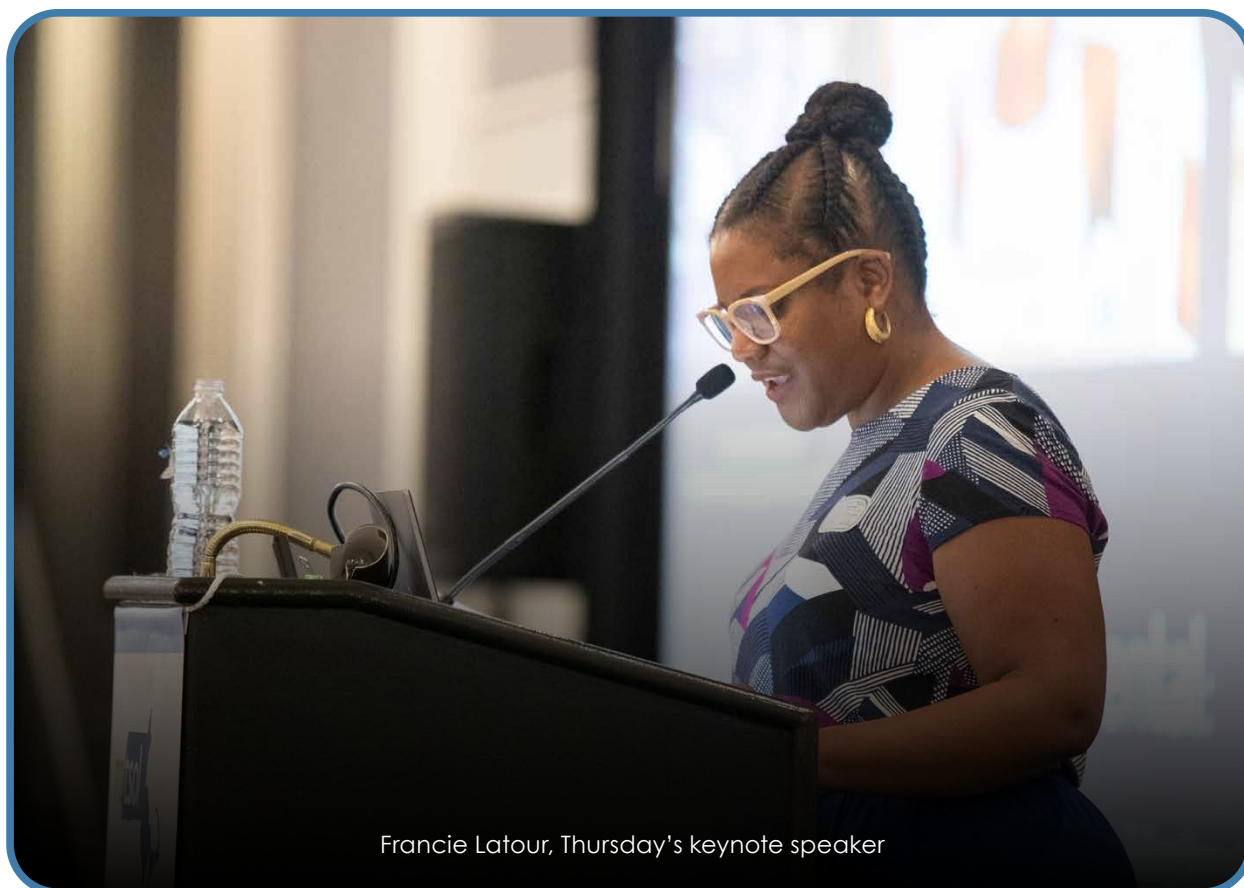
- *When you enter a space, what are the signals you look for to know you belong and are welcome?*
- *Conversely, what are cues that you are not?*
- *What can you DO in your schools to make ALL your students feel like they belong?*

FRANCIE LATOUR: WE ARE MONUMENTAL: ENGAGING KIDS IN CULTURAL AFFIRMATION AND HISTORICAL TRUTH-TELLING THROUGH ART AND STORY

Francie Latour is a writer, educator, and daughter of Haitian immigrants who lives in Boston. She co-founded and leads the racial justice education project [Wee The People \(WTP\)](#), which designs workshops, trainings, and community activities that center historical truth-telling and Black joy. In her keynote, she shared her work engaging kids K-12 in immersive learning experiences grounded in art and story that center Black and Brown lived experience through picture books, art-making, movement, and interactive games. She described how art and story



Dr. Suárez-Orozco, Wednesday's keynote speaker



Francie Latour, Thursday's keynote speaker

are vital to affirming our shared humanity, reclaiming erased histories, and countering destructive narratives of Us and Them.

Following her keynote, Ms. Latour signed copies of her book *Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings*, sponsored by I'm Your Neighbor Books.

CLAUDIA RINALDI, PH.D: ENSURING ACCESS, BUILDING OWNERSHIP: SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

Professor of Education and Chair of the Undergraduate Education Program at Lasell University.

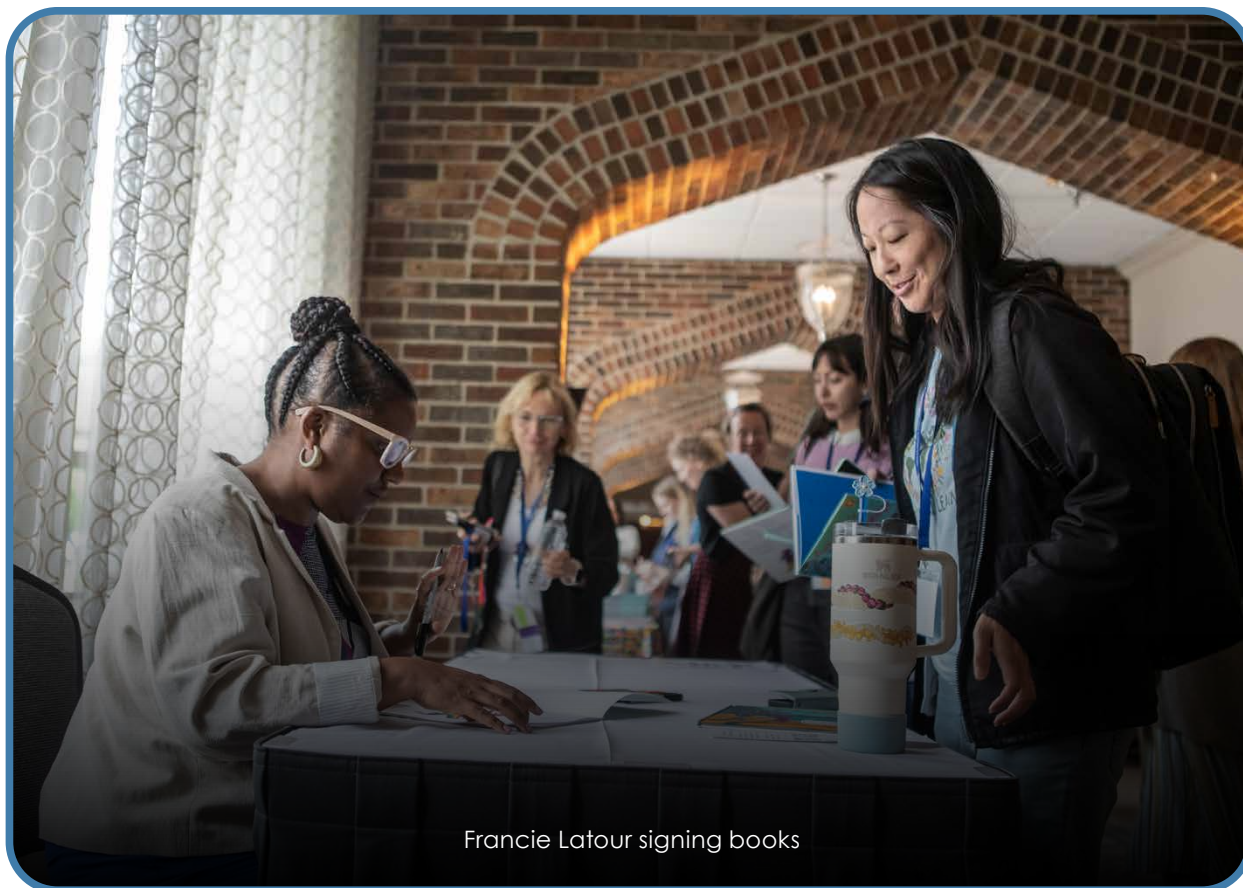
Dr. Rinaldi guided the audience into an exploration of strategies for supporting dually identified students. Dr. Rinaldi maintained that collaboration and inclusive practices can help educators ensure success for all students, especially students with special needs and English learners. She encourages her audience to engage in automatic habits by highlighting that with a daily improvement of 1%, "You will have improved 37% by the end of the school year." Dr. Rinaldi challenges her audience with this question, "Who is the teacher you want to be?" She assures that a change of teachers' philosophy about students can bring significant change in outcomes.

MAJOR THEMES

1. Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogy
 - Strategies for affirming students' identities and incorporating their home cultures into classroom instruction.
 - Case studies showing positive impact on student engagement and academic language development.
2. Instructional Practices for Academic Language Development
 - Workshops on scaffolding complex texts designing formative assessments, and integration of literacy practices across content areas.
 - Focus on balancing language development with content mastery.
3. Family and Community Engagement
 - Sessions highlighted partnerships with families as co-educators.
 - Examples included bilingual parent workshops, family literacy



Dr. Claudi Rinaldi, Friday's keynote speaker



Francie Latour signing books

nights, and culturally responsive communication tools.

4. Policy Updates and Advocacy

- Presentations on Massachusetts state policies, title III funding, and implication of recent federal guidance.
- Encouragement for educators to advocate for equitable resources and support.

5. Technology and Innovation

- Digital tools showcased as instrumental for language learning, AI-supported translation, differentiation, and multilingual learning platforms.
- Discussions on ensuring equitable access to technology for all learners

6. Network and collaboration

The conference provided various opportunities for

- Connection across Massachusetts and neighboring states

- Sharing of best practices in breakout sessions and poster presentations.
- Meeting vendors offering curriculum resources, translation services, and assessment tools.

1. Implication for districts and other educational settings

Recommendations that can strengthen our multilingual learner programming

- Expand professional development in culturally sustaining pedagogy
- Implement new family engagement strategies that build stronger school-home partnership
- Explore digital tools to support both language acquisition and academic content learning.
- Review state and federal updates to ensure compliance and maximize available funding.



PARTICIPANT IMPRESSIONS

Several educators interviewed on their impression about the conference were quick to express the network opportunity. These educators were unanimous about how appreciative they are to network with professionals from different districts. They understand that many of the realities they face in their own districts are not unique and that the conference offers a rich platform for them to explore strategies that can be used to improve their practices while they continue offering their best educational opportunities to multilingual learners. For Emily Humphrey, “A lot of us are dealing with the climate going on in our country,” with a bit of sadness on her face. Then she continued, “... but it’s nice to know that we belong to a big community of professionals, that we are going through this together, not just isolated in our district.” Then Anna Anthropova added, “I like to come to the MATSOL conference. It motivates us to go back to the classroom with fresh ideas that we can try in our classrooms for the upcoming school year.”



CONCLUSION

The 2025 MATSOL Conference reaffirmed the collective commitment of educators in the promotion and advancement of equity, inclusion, and academic

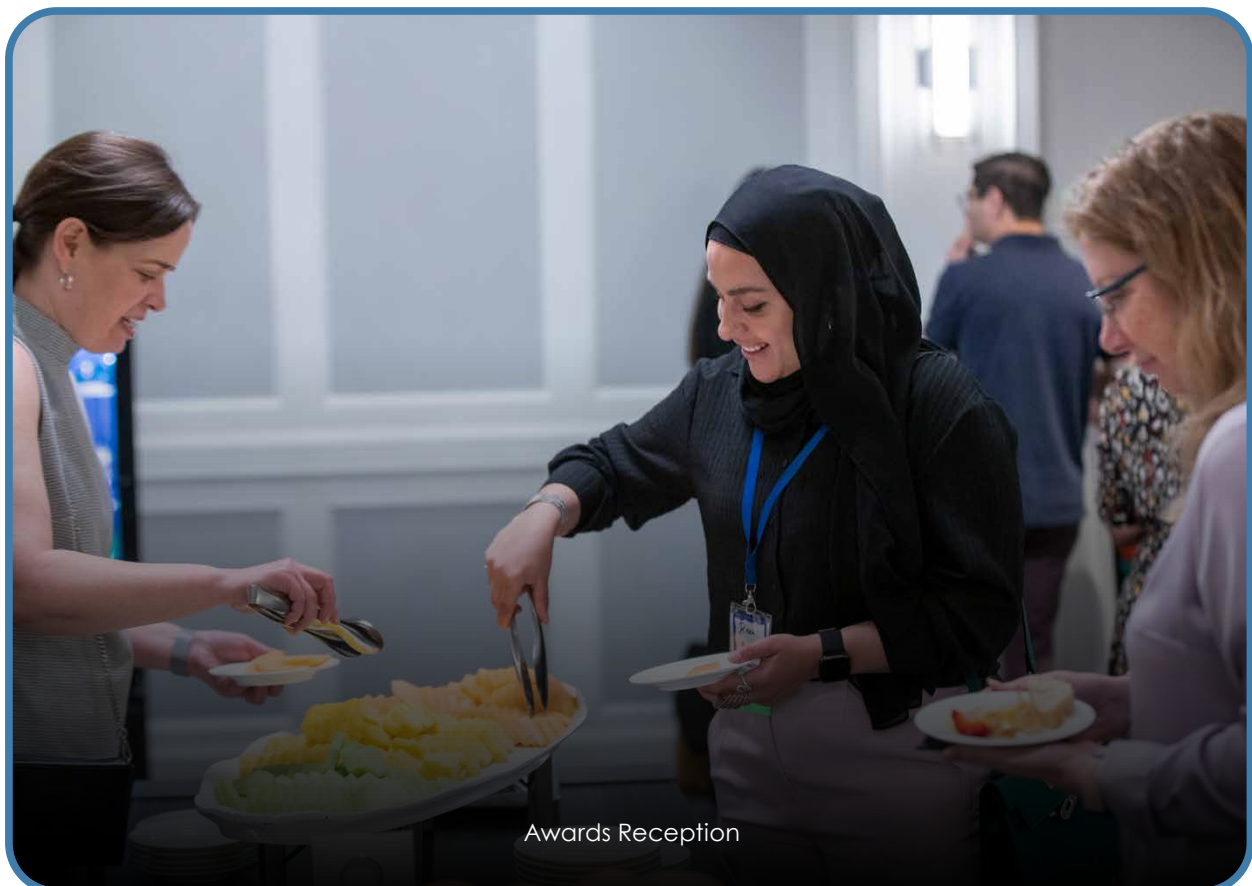
success for multilingual learners. The takeaway will impact our instructional practices, professional development priorities, and community engagement efforts in the coming years. In addition to the prolific presentations where professionals of English language education exchange ideas on best practices, they also build strong professional connections and networking.

2025 MATSOL AWARDS

Irma Valerius, New Bedford Public Schools, received the **Anne Dow Award for Excellence & Creativity** for advocacy in support of English learners. Irma is an ESL Lead Teacher and Coach at New Bedford Public Schools. During her 27 year career in the department that serves multilingual learners, Irma has served as a teacher, advocate, sup-




Irma Valerius



Awards Reception

port for families, and mentor/coach for staff. She was a teacher in TBE and SEI then ESL before transitioning to a Teaching and Learning Specialist for ESL and is now a lead teacher and coach. Irma was a member of several teams that established important initiatives at New Bedford Public Schools, including the first ELPAC and “Family Institute for Student Success,” and to establish the first Dual Language Education Program. In addition, Irma has served as a Mentor for ESL, Newcomer, Dual Language and World Language programs, and she promotes the culture of students and families by organizing unique annual celebrations for Hispanic Heritage and Black History Month.

Megan Gabellieri, Woodland Elementary School, Milford, received the **Linda Schulman Innovation Grant** for the project “Promoting Multilingual Literacy.” The \$500 grant will be used to provide students with access to multilingual texts that support their learning across languages.

The award recipients were celebrated at the Awards Ceremony at the 2025 MATSOL Conference, which was generously sponsored by Imagine Learning. 



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Bilingual Family Engagement Through Teacher-Structured Visual Arts

Dr. Julia (Yulia) Stakhnevich

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EXPERIENCE shows that often bilingual parents assume that using the minority language at home will automatically result in their children becoming bilingual. Although to a certain degree this approach might yield some success, the resulting bilingualism might become heavily imbalanced by middle childhood with the kids not being able to express the complexity of their identities equally well in both languages (De Houwer, 2007). Research shows that many Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA), Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA), and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) children eventually switch to the majority language even in their interactions with parents and siblings due to the pressures from the majority language (De Houwer, 2021).

On the other hand, harmonious bilingualism (which can be defined as being able to reach complete native-speaker mastery in both languages) is highly desirable as it offers children the most benefits of bilingualism without societal punishments (De Houwer, 2020). Harmonious bilingualism requires lots of varied bilingual input and is usually only attainable in cases where children have equal plentiful opportunities to be engaged in both languages in various social contexts. The goal of this essay is to share activities and strategies that teachers can suggest to parents to promote the use of family language in the contexts where the language of instruction is the language of the majority and where teachers employ visual arts activities as part of their curriculum.

The ideas for this essay came from the reflections on my own experiences as a parent supporting my BFLA (Russian and English) seven-year-old child taking a comic drawing course. It is important to note that in the context of the class that my son was taking, his teacher guided him through the completion of various drawing activities as part of the lesson, but no homework was suggested. I wanted to extrapolate the benefits of this class to our own language practices at home and was creating mini-homework assignments that my child and I completed between his classes. My goal was to offer him activities that would

engage both of us side-by-side to create and discuss visual stories together. The underlying philosophical positions that informed the creation of these activities are, first, the acknowledgement of language choice as a fundamental right for all families and, second, the realization that as per Grosjean's famous statement, bilinguals are not merely a sum of two monolinguals and are always in the possession of their two languages that impact their identities and serve as resources and linguistic capital.

To construct these activities, I turned to the Guided Drawing Model developed by Cassano & Pacoga (2023) and extended it to include not only teacher-initiated language learning through guided drawing, but also at-home bilingual language practice through drawing with parental support and participation. The proposed bilingual drawing together activities include the following: autobiographical comics, situations and emotions (self-portraits, drawing comics side-by-side, funny animal comics and superheroes), and drawing as playing and mixed media explorations. As a genre, comics lend themselves especially well as a vehicle for these activities because of the crossover between images and language, a high level of engagement that young children typically have for comics, and a very basic level of drawing skills required (who says that stick figures can't represent myself and my child?)

DRAWING TOGETHER ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS

Drawing autobiographical comics together with parents provides a rich foundation for parent-child interactions. A parent can choose a story from their own childhood or a story about the child from their early childhood. After agreeing on the story, parent and child can work together to ensure that the narrative has the necessary exposition, development, and denouement. For example, my son chose to co-create a comic with me about his first trip to the emergency room after a slip on the floor when he was a toddler. If a child has more writing skills in one of their languages, it is important to let them use this language for speech bubbles. At the end of the activity, parents and children can work together to translate the comics into their other language. It will be helpful to show the comics to other family members and have them read through the bubbles. This creates a special audience for the child, demonstrating to them the importance of writing in a way that others can understand.

SITUATIONS AND EMOTIONS: SELF-PORTRAITS

Together with a parent, a child could draw several (three, four or six) mini-self portraits with each portrait being one frame of the comic. Portraits will express the child's different emotional states (e.g. losing a toy – sadness, coming back from school – joy, could I play more on the computer – hope, dad brought home a kitten – happiness, etc.). Each frame should

have a drawing of the situation to which the child attaches a different emotion. Parents could guide a discussion of these emotional states and ask children to write at the top of each drawing the corresponding emotion. The writing could be done in the home language or if this is too difficult for the child at this point, a parent can offer necessary help. Alternatively, names of emotional states can be written in English and translated by the parent and child into the home language.

DRAWING COMICS SIDE-BY-SIDE

Parents and children agree on a recent event that they both lived through and use the comics format to describe their experiences in several frames (three or four will work best.) For example, it could be the first day of school/holidays, a recent birthday party, a trip to see grandparents, etc. The main goal of this activity is to give an opportunity to both grown-ups and children to express their interpretation of the same event and then compare two comics to identify differences and underscore similarities. Language choice for the writing and final discussion in this activity need to be agreed upon prior to drawing. If necessary, the adult could help the child with the translation and/or writing. The side-by-side comics could be presented to other family members in the language of their preference.

FUNNY ANIMAL COMICS AND SUPERHEROES

A parent can offer to invent, draw, and describe fantastical creatures from imagination and/or to create a slew of new superheroes. For superheroes, super talents will have to be identified and the child and parent will need to decide whether the character uses their talent for good or bad. This activity might lead to the creation of new words to name newly minted fantastical creatures or to create names for new superheroes, which with parental guidance could result in a discussion of language-specific word formation patterns and/or how languages impact each other in terms of loan words.


DRAWING AS PLAYING AND MIXED MEDIA EXPLORATIONS

Although comics can be drawn with any pen or pencil, in this activity parents and children are invited to explore a mixed media approach, which allows them to play with different materials and combine them in new ways. For example, many children like to draw with crayons, but don't know that crayons work well with watercolors by reserving the paper and not allowing the paint to flow freely over the paper. This mixed media technique allows for drawing of bright and shiny details with crayons on the dark watercolor background, for example stars in the dark sky or gold piastres at the bottom of a pirate trunk. This activity provides opportunities for parents and children to play with various materials, discuss this approach to creating art, and reflect on their own attitude toward mixed media.

It is my hope that the proposed activities and strategies will be useful to teachers who offer parents support in sustaining multilingual language practices at home and helpful to those parents who are themselves searching for simple ways to expand the use of the non-mainstream language by their children. Language loss in BFLA, ESLA, and SLA is not unusual, at least in production – that is, children might stop speaking in the minority language and often respond to parents' utterances in the societal language. "If parents do not use monolingual discourse strategies, even ESLA preschoolers may lose the ability to speak their L1" (De Houwer, 2021, p. 35).

Harmonious bilingualism is difficult to achieve but putting it on the parents' radar as an aspirational goal and sharing with them activities and strategies that they can use ... will help families in raising kids who are sophisticated speakers of both languages.

If parents desire for their kids to be well versed in both languages and aspire for them to be as harmoniously bilingual as possible, they need to provide additional contexts, experiences, and environments for their children to practice the minority language within and outside of their home. Teachers, then, need to support bilingual families in extending additional opportunities for engagement with their home language beyond the usual home interactions. Harmonious bilingualism is difficult to achieve but putting it on the parents' radar as an aspirational goal and sharing with them activities and strategies that they can use to support bilingual development will help families in raising kids who are sophisticated speakers of both languages. In this model, schools support parents in co-constructing bilingual language environments in order to compensate for the lack of L1 input and to activate parental language resources to the full of their potential.

Harmonious bilingualism might be a tall order for many of us, but for our children to move toward it on the continuum of bilingual language proficiency, we as teachers and parents need to provide rich and varied bilingual input and allow authentic and meaningful interactions in both languages. With that in mind, are there any content lessons that you teach that already utilize drawing? How could these lessons be extended through parental participation into the minority language? How would you ensure and evaluate parental participation? 

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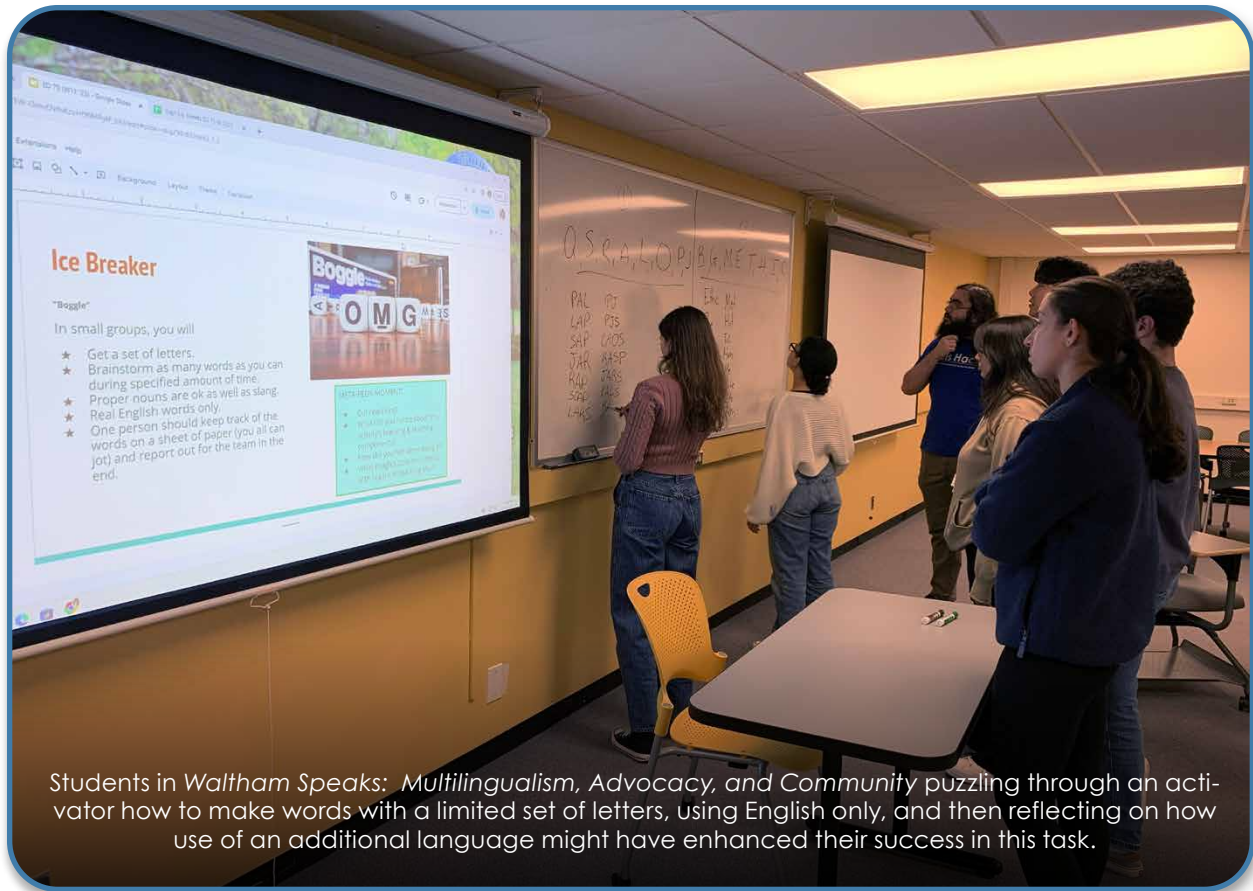
Developing Educators of “All Kinds” to Work with Multilingual Youth and Adults

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THROUGHOUT educator preparation, there is a common question we aim to resolve: *How can we begin to learn what to prioritize knowing and being able to do to best teach multilingual humans?* Diving deeper into this admittedly broad question, those of us who work in educator preparation are compelled to discuss the ‘what/why/how’ of such topics as linguistic and cultural assets and biases held by both our teacher candidates, ourselves, and within the institutions they hope to teach or work. Locating students’ learning within the broader historical, political, and sociological movements are also important learning goals in service of answering the aforementioned question. Further, because many of our students intend to work in PK-12 or Adult ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) contexts, we must both teach with and model for mastery pedagogy within the field that prioritizes functional linguistics, an understanding sociocultural context theory, and is culturally and linguistically sustaining. To cement our students’ efficacy and sense of purpose in their work with multilingual humans, we must provide deep contextualization via fieldwork or practice in ESOL and Sheltered English Instruction (SEI). This component begets yet another dilemma within educator preparation: *How can we develop mutually beneficial relationships between students of education and the community based organizations working with multilingual students in which they volunteer/practice teaching?* One could argue that answers to many of the questions posed above are studied throughout a career in multilingual education! Still, educator preparation programs throughout Massachusetts are tasked with a consequential choice: creating multiple courses for educating well-rounded, highly informed, justice oriented teachers of multilingual humans OR simply teaching to the MA RETELL standards for SEI which include a perfunctory set of objectives



Students in *Waltham Speaks: Multilingualism, Advocacy, and Community* puzzling through an activator how to make words with a limited set of letters, using English only, and then reflecting on how use of an additional language might have enhanced their success in this task.

and strategies (MA DESE, 2011). It is within this context that I developed an Education Studies elective at Brandeis University entitled: *Waltham Speaks: Multilingualism, Advocacy and Community*.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Waltham Speaks: Multilingualism, Advocacy and Community is a one-semester, 4 credit Education Studies course wherein (mostly) undergraduates study both *about* multilingualism and education for immigrant origin students in the United States while simultaneously *working with* multilingual educators in Waltham, MA educational contexts. The audience for this course includes a broad set of students such as future teachers, individuals who volunteer/work with multilingual humans throughout Waltham, folks interested in coursework that included service learning, and anyone interested in an interdisciplinary study of education in the United States. As a whole, in this class students study the historical, political, and sociological foundations of multilingualism in the US and their practical impacts on Waltham multilingual educational contexts. Via about 40 hours of internship work spread throughout the semester, students experience the complexities and opportunities of multilingual PK-Adult education while offering tangible organizational support. As part of the course requirements, students learn to do Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) and also learn particular English as

an Additional Language (EAL) pedagogies to best teach multilingual humans. An essential question of our course is: *How can we promote and advocate for multilingualism in Waltham, MA while acknowledging and chipping away at institutional and societal inequities?*

The learning goals for this course are that *students will*:

- Trace the evolution of Waltham community organizations within the contexts of history, policy, social factors, as well as community input.
- Examine impacts of sociological, historical, educational and socio-cultural elements on pedagogy and programming for multilingual students and families.
- Analyze linguistic, cultural and familial factors within the context of community organizational programming and their role in culturally and linguistically sustaining education/programming.
- Create and analyze products and programming for Waltham partners that focus on ESOL practices via culturally and linguistically sustaining lenses.
- Interview Waltham partners to understand programming and offer tools to organizations to enhance their work.
- Reflect by engaging with one's positionality, humility, sensitivity, and "reflexivity" about oneself as a volunteer within Waltham's multilingual community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INTERNSHIPS

As a member of various multilingual education working groups within Waltham, MA and the Greater Boston Area, I've often been tapped to bring volunteers and student teachers into English education contexts. Within these ongoing efforts, I've benefited from learning how to inquire *who* benefits the most from volunteering (Davis, 2006). Further, I have spent many years developing strong relationships with Waltham educators working toward a model of college student internships as apprenticeships, where mentor and intern benefit alike (Feiman Nemser, 2000). As a result, I focus partnership meetings on how students can help organizations forward and deepen new or existing work in the field during their 4-6 hours/week of service per semester *while* returning to reflect upon and address the framing questions of my course. Each year community partners and I co-develop the internships which range from ESOL classroom teacher assistants to editorial staff for photo essays about identity to creating videos featuring college students discussing mental health, and much more. Oversight and administration is shared and students complete weekly reflections and posit goals for the next week of work. Finally, students craft a presentation of findings and what they have learned along with multiple resources to give to their partner organization. While the details of the internship have varied over the years, mutual de-

velopment and maintenance of student work in the field has been a core and important course structure.

COURSE CONTENT & PEDAGOGY

A graduate student I once met who was new to Massachusetts shared that her first step when getting to know a new community was to volunteer within it. In fact, Waltham Group, a longtime community service organization at Brandeis begins all of its fieldwork with a training entitled “[Waltham: The More You Know](#)”. As such, I feel it important that students begin my course getting to know Waltham and the significant growth of its English learner populations over the past several years ([US Census Bureau, 2010](#)). At present, 24.9% of its PK-12 students are classified as Multilingual students and families and nearly 50% of all students speak a language other than English at home ([MA DART, 2019](#)). To respond to these population shifts, the community has gone through some much needed reflection and critical consciousness, while also expanding and fortifying the broad network of organizations ready to serve English learner families. A lot has been accomplished over the years! In 2019, Waltham Partnership for Youth secured a large grant to create the Wraparound Waltham to more effectively support all students in and out of school contexts. In 2015 the community rallied to create Waltham’s first Spanish Dual Language Elementary School as an example



Students in *Waltham Speaks: Multilingualism, Advocacy, and Community* reading and discussing picture books on immigration, immigrant experiences in the US, and related topics.

of bilingualism in the community. Over the years, the Waltham Public Schools have built a strong bilingual family liaison network including a vocal BLPAC (Bilingual and English Learner Parents Advisory Council). In fall 2024, Waltham opened its first alternative school, Valor High, as well as adult ESOL courses in the district's two middle schools. The public library has a strong and well attended ESOL program and other literacy initiatives, some which are bilingual. Waltham Family School is a longstanding public-private partnership whereby parents



receive wraparound services, two years of ESOL classes, and childcare. These organizations are *only a sample* of how Waltham, MA has embraced multilingualism. The quest for my students is to learn about these amazing developments within the contexts of history, politics, and social movements *and* learn from the professionals that lead them about how to advocate for and educate multilingual humans.


The next step in the course is to zoom out to the broader context of multilingual and immigrant origin education beyond Waltham and its educational organizations. While the city itself has made gains, they sit within a historically negative and deficit-based view of Multilingual students and families in America. Such institutionalized assumptions affect achievement of Multilingual students; even

staying in school through graduation is a challenge (MA DART, 2019). As in other communities, English learner families have also faced anti-immigrant rhetoric at a national level, which further impedes community efforts of support and advocacy (Lander, 2023). We also know that individual identities and sociocultural contexts shape how we feel, act, and our beliefs about upward mobility and what role language fluency plays in this elongated process (Jack, 2019). Raciolinguistics, the study of the co-influences on race, language, and racism (Shashkevich, 2016), plays a central role in upending what it means to be 'English proficient' and the role that plays our society (Flores & Rosa, 2015). My students learn to question the role of English in both United States educational contexts and the pursuit of upward social mobility. To knit together these topics, my students read *Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education* (2023) by Jessica Lander, a Lowell High School teacher and 2024 Massachusetts Social Studies Educator of the Year. Lander's chapters are organized around case studies and history lessons exploring the "past, present, and personal". Students learn how history, policy, and social sentiments about multilingual education are echoed in contemporary educational contexts including current legislation and its impact on multilingual and immigrant origin educational programming around the United States. Via sections of Lander's chapters entitled "the personal" guide my students in learning how to address one's positionality (ability to understand our various identities and their influence on our studies and internship) and how 'reflexivity' (questioning the impact of your identities on your actions) can affect their work in course internships (Brown, retrieved 3/18/25). Students reflect on the interplay of these various disciplines as it appears in their internships via weekly journaling and in regular meetings with me and community partners. They also lead peers in weekly reading groups and in studying and reporting on multilingualism in contemporary media to bolster their integration of theory into practice.

Next, students learn basic language development theory, SEI/ESOL/bilingual education pedagogies with a functional linguistics approach and engage in guided practice in assessing language proficiency and using appropriate scaffolds for working with multilingual students. Students also practice a critical language approach in their work in the field by employing translanguaging as an active anti-racist pedagogy to support multilingualism (Garcia, 2023). After analyzing linguistic and sociocultural programming and/or lessons from their internships, they craft sheltered and linguistically and culturally affirming educational materials for the organizations. Brandeis interns will also be tasked by community organizations to modify content for ESOL students which have been used years later by Waltham professionals. As this is not a course on how to teach multilingual students, I have had to prioritize which theory and pedagogy to teach, particularly given that most students in this course do not go on to become formal educators. However, for those who pursue educator licensure, the work students do for this part of the course is significantly richer than what is required

for the MA SEI Endorsement (MA DESE, 2011) and has had a positive impact on their student teaching.

NEXT STEPS & FURTHER RESEARCH

“Waltham Speaks” sets out to prioritize and teach a set of skills, knowledge, mindsets, and other valuable insights that Brandeis students *should* know in order to be an ‘educator of all kinds’ (whether as teacher candidates or volunteers in the community) supporting multilingual youth and families in Waltham. However, and most critically, via close mentoring from community partners, Brandeis students learn from professionals *how they themselves* enact such skills, knowledge, mindsets in their work—amplifying the wisdom of such educators whose voices can easily get lost in political rhetoric. At present, I am seeking better forms of assessment to analyze the extent of my students’ learning, how it has and may continue to impact their work in multilingual education contexts, and the depth of productivity and ways to improve our Brandeis-Waltham partnerships. I will be spending the next several months conducting interviews with community partners and alumni of the course to further develop my assessment practices and improve the course. Are the topics I’ve explored here the ‘right’ ones to be researching and studying? Are there topics within these topics I have yet to tackle? I am quite sure there are! One thing is for sure, Waltham community partners possess remarkable and multifaceted knowledge, skill and persistence in their work and Brandeis students and all of us have much to learn about best ways to amplify multilingualism from their masterful work. 

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A Journey Through Language

Nathan Couto

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LANGUAGE and culture shape our identities in profound ways, often influenced by family, schooling, and life experiences. The journey with my own linguistic and cultural identity has been deeply impacted by my Portuguese heritage, my residence and schooling in southeastern Massachusetts, and the diverse cultural experiences that have expanded my worldview. These experiences have not only shaped how I perceive and interact with language but have also influenced my sense of belonging within different linguistic communities. The significance of these influences extends beyond communication, affecting my relationship with my family, my view of education, and my personal growth.



My family emigrated from Portugal, specifically from the Azores, to the United States before I was born. This geographic detail is crucial because Azorean Portuguese, particularly spoken by those from poor communities, is sometimes viewed as inferior to the “mainland” Portuguese spoken in Lisbon and other urban centers. My parents, coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, had varying levels of formal language and literacy development in both English and Portuguese. My mother, for instance, only had formal education up to the third grade in Portugal but later earned an associate’s degree from Bristol Community College in Massachusetts. My father, on the other hand, attended elementary and middle school in Portugal and completed his high school education in the U.S. Their differing educational paths influenced their perspectives on language and literacy, which in turn affected my own linguistic development.

Born and raised in southeastern Massachusetts, I was immersed in Portuguese from birth. My parents and extended family primarily spoke Portuguese to me in my early years, fostering a strong connection to my heritage. However, once I started school, my parents made the switch to speaking solely in English at home to presumably prepare me for academic success. This shift had an enormous impact on my identity. It was as if a linguistic bridge to my grandparents and Portuguese roots had been demolished overnight. While I maintained receptive skills in Portuguese, I was no longer actively producing the language, which created a sense of loss. “The choice of language in the home is often driven by broader societal norms and pressures, rather than individual preference alone” (Baker & Wright, 2021). My parents’ decision was well-intentioned and aligned with monolingual norms prevalent in the U.S., where many immigrant families believe that prioritizing English is the best path to success in school

(García & Wei, 2014). This pressure to assimilate linguistically is a common experience among bilingual children in America.

Despite my exposure to Portuguese with my grandparents through full weeks together in the summer and weekly visits during the school year, English quickly became the dominant language in my life, both at home and in school. Within the Portuguese-American community, this shift is often described as being “Americanized,” a label I identified with throughout my early years. My linguistic identity was shaped not just by the language I spoke but by the cultural expectations that came with it. While I remained proud of my heritage, I also felt distanced from it in significant ways.

High school provided an opportunity for me to rebuild my connection to the Portuguese language and, by extension, my cultural identity. Enrolling in Portuguese courses allowed me to reconnect with a part of myself that had been slowly sinking since childhood. As Baker & Wright (2021) point out, “bilingual education provides not only linguistic skills but also an avenue for identity affirmation and cultural connection.” Reflecting from my current perspective, I realize that I always had the opportunity to reinforce my Portuguese with my parents, but as an adolescent, I never thought to ask them to maintain a bilingual household. The monolingual norms I had internalized made me believe that Portuguese belonged to the past, while English was the language of my present and likely my future.

My experience in Portuguese classes, however, came with unexpected challenges. My teacher was Brazilian, and while Brazilian and European Portuguese share the same linguistic roots, they also have distinct differences in accent, pronunciation, vocabulary, and collocations. This linguistic divergence created a new identity conflict for me. My mother, for example, loved my Brazilian accent, implying that it sounded better than the Azorean Portuguese we spoke at home. My paternal grandmother, however, was constantly correcting my pronunciation, my word choices, and even my basic grammatical mistakes. These conflicting reactions led me to shy away from speaking Portuguese in certain settings, as I felt caught between different variations of the language and the cultural identities they represented.

Despite these challenges, my Portuguese courses instilled in me a deep appreciation for Brazilian culture. Although I am not Brazilian, I developed a fascination with the language and culture, which shaped the way I perceived my linguistic identity. I began to blend the Brazilian and Azorean Portuguese sounds, creating a hybrid that felt unique to me. This blending of linguistic influences reflects a broader reality of language learners who navigate multiple dialects and cultural expectations simultaneously (Hornberger & Link, 2012).


Later in high school, I had the opportunity to participate in an exchange program that further expanded my linguistic and cultural awareness. Through this

program, I learned basic Japanese and hosted a Japanese student from Okinawa for a month before traveling to Okinawa myself to attend high school there. This experience deepened my appreciation for language as a bridge to cultural understanding. Although I do not have a Japanese heritage, I felt a strong connection to the language and culture because of the people I met. In many ways, I began to see myself as partially Japanese, not in an ethnic sense, but in a cultural and emotional one.

Japan and Portugal are two of the three countries outside the U.S. I have visited or lived in more than once (the other being Mexico). Each experience has reinforced my belief that language is more than just a means of communication—it is a vehicle for forming meaningful relationships and understanding different worldviews. These experiences have also taught me that linguistic identity is fluid. While I initially felt a sense of loss when my parents transitioned to speaking English at home, I later realized that my multilingual experiences have given me a more expansive view of the world.

Beyond my multilingual experiences, my English language identity has also been shaped by regional influences. Across the country, many people would say that I have an accent or that I pronounce things differently. Southeastern Massachusetts, particularly areas like Fall River and New Bedford, has distinct linguistic characteristics that set it apart even from other parts of the state. Unfortunately, these regional accents are sometimes deemed lesser, reinforcing the idea that certain ways of speaking are more prestigious than others. This perception mirrors the experiences my relatives faced with Azorean Portuguese being seen as less prestigious than mainland Portuguese.

These experiences have deepened my understanding of linguistic hierarchies and the biases that come with them. Whether it is the perception of Azorean Portuguese as “lesser” than mainland Portuguese, or the Fall River accent being looked down upon compared to standard midwestern American English, these biases shape how people perceive both language and identity. They also highlight the broader societal tendency to associate language with power, education, and social class (Lippi-Green, 2012).

My linguistic and cultural identity has been shaped by the complex interplay of family decisions, schooling, and life experiences. From my early childhood immersion in Portuguese to my parents’ switch to English, from my high school Portuguese classes to my exchange program in Japan, each experience has contributed to the way I view language and identity. While there were moments of loss and conflict, there were also opportunities for growth and rediscovery. Today, I embrace the fluidity of my linguistic identity, recognizing that language is not just about communication but about connection, culture, and belonging. Language will never be just one thing. 

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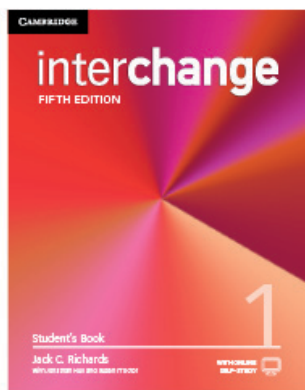
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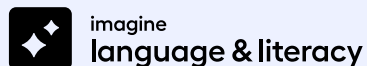
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Learning the Art of Teaching from a Multilingual Third Grader: Three Modules ESL Teachers Need to Know

Maria A. Geueke

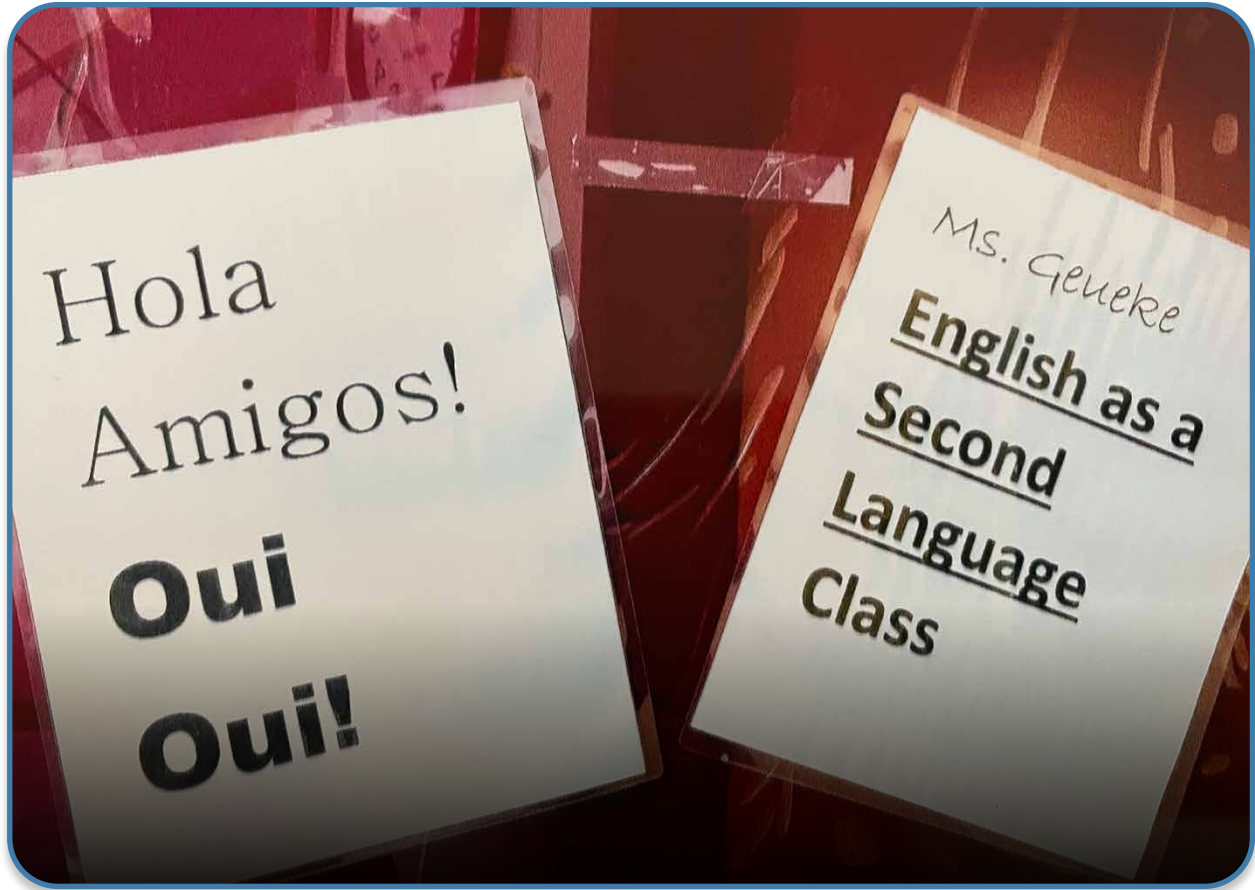
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T was the end of a usual day teaching English as a Second Language in rural Massachusetts, where students lined up at the door ready to go to their prospective third grade elementary general education classrooms. The routine when ending class is that they line up at the door. When they enter class, one student says “hola” and the student walking into class responds with “oui oui”. These routines were decided on at the beginning of the year through class collaboration. This time, at the end of class, when getting ready to line up at the door something rather fascinating occurred. One of my multilingual third graders asked if she could stay longer and spend some time with the Expo markers and whiteboard to design something. First, I was hesitant. I didn’t want to have a negative response from her general education teacher regarding her staying longer with me. The more I studied her design, however, the more excited I became about what she was working on. It was a teaching model PreK-12 that she designed specifically for me, an English as a Second Language teacher. The model involved three parts or modules to a successful teaching framework: 1. *Sharing* 2. *Working* and 3. *Gaming*. In teacher education language, each of these modules represent a depth of research that responds to their significance in the meaningful teaching/education of multilingual students.

SHARING

Sharing means more than equal participation of ideas and questions, it is part of a philosophy that recognizes that schools are culturally different from multilingual students’ social and literate worlds (Delpit, 1995; García & Kleifgen, 2019). Sharing may be referenced from a variety of sociocultural theories and frameworks of teaching: it can mean culturally sustaining, value of students’ funds of knowledge, critical literacy pedagogy, multiliteracies, meaningful parent participation, and so forth. My student may have been referencing the circle sharing time that marked the beginning of every class: she understood that this activity supported enriching knowledge about each other, fostering a strong communi-



ty.

Sharing also implies valuing, learning from, and respecting each other's social and linguistic differences, incorporating sociolinguistic justice goals (Bucholtz et al., 2014), and supporting learning through the Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy framework (Baker-Bell, 2020). To be able to facilitate a classroom centered in sharing, means observing and recognizing one's responsibility for the messages students receive of their language repertoires and supporting meaning making students engage in that values students' use of language. For example, being prepared to recognize that schools and educators influence social contexts where languages begin to be valued or devalued, such as in the interaction between "Lyron and Ezekial" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 11) who "demonstrate that learning language is inextricably linked to learning to be with others in a socially complex world" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 11).

WORKING

Working means several things about ESL teaching. First, teachers need to have both high expectations of themselves and of their students. This means including rigorous material with opportunities for gifted education. **Students can learn content and concepts from a variety of disciplines working on projects that draw from their motivations while making a difference in their community and**

the world at large (Morrell, 2015).

Listening to Dr. Ernest Morrell speak on YouTube and reading his book *Critical media pedagogy: Teaching for achievement in city schools* sparked many answers to my questions about the connection between student motivation and “powerful teaching”. I learned the value of students forming identities as mathematicians, researchers, or playwrights as examples, feeling a sense of purpose, and the importance of students feeling that school is relevant to their daily lived experiences. For example, one time in a meeting with educators

deciding to push a high school student out of the usual day time schooling, my voice that school was not relevant for this student was echoed by the student himself, yet his or my complaints did not push teachers to try to understand his motivations. For my third grader’s framework to be able to be applied by teachers, teachers must be able to be flexible, find out what students get excited about, be able to conform to students’ motivations as well as enacting love as an action by addressing students’ daily lived “social toxins” in and out of school.

Vasquez (2017) offers helpful insights for supporting meaningful learning experiences at the elementary level. Through questions and topics that get students excited, students can engage in more difficult learning tasks that are aligned to their zone of proximal development, developmental age, motivation, literacies, language development, and any sensory or physical needs.

GAMING

Gee (2013) demonstrates strong connections between gaming and teaching as intertwined phenomena. Dr. Gee explains how teachers can learn about the world of “gaming” to improve their practices, outlining twelve distinct ways that explain how “good video games teach” (Gee, 2013, p. 18).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It may be fruitful to reflect on these three modules, asking yourself if you use these in your classroom, if you use one more than the other, or if one is missing. Including these three modules equally and in an interconnected fashion may bring out better learning outcomes and language learning experiences for your students. **C**

I learned the value of students forming identities as mathematicians, researchers, or playwrights as examples, feeling a sense of purpose, and the importance of students feeling that school is relevant to their daily lived experiences.

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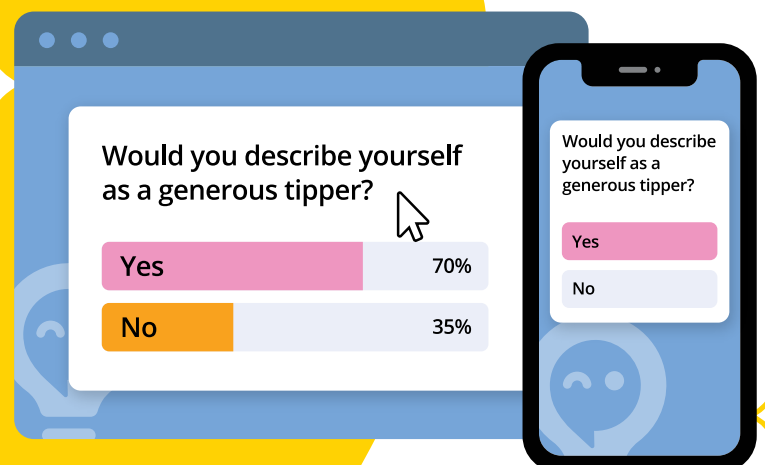
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Mingling for Understanding: How Cross-Cultural Events Unite UMass ESL and Veteran Students

Dr. Pamela A. Shea

I**NTERCULTURAL** communication is a vital skill in our increasingly diverse society. As faculty members in fields such as ESL (English as a Second Language), TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and intercultural communication, we have a unique opportunity to foster understanding and bridge gaps between individuals from diverse backgrounds. At UMass Amherst, a diverse student body often faces challenges in connecting across cultural lines. According to Fisher (2021), student-organized cultural events have the potential to enhance intercultural understanding by providing a platform for students to interact with one another in meaningful ways, creating shared spaces for learning and exchange.



A notable initiative addressing these challenges is the collaboration between the ESL program and UMass Amherst's Veteran Services. While the ESL program supports international students in adapting academically and socially to a new cultural environment, Veteran Services assists student veterans in navigating the transition from military to academic life. Both groups, international students and student veterans, often experience a sense of separation from the broader campus community. By organizing cross-cultural engagement events, we can create spaces for meaningful interaction, fostering a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and helping students develop cultural competence in a supportive environment (Byram, 2022). These events allow for students to share their stories and cultural perspectives, which enriches their overall experience on campus and promotes a sense of belonging within the UMass community.

In this article, I will share experiences from an event held on





March 13th, 2025, where the ESL and Veteran Services programs collaborated on an intercultural engagement activity. I will also offer insights into how educators can facilitate similar events to encourage intercultural competence among students. The discussion will conclude by emphasizing the importance of extending learning beyond the classroom through structured activities that promote cultural exchange.



A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT: ESL AND VETERAN SERVICES

The connection between the ESL program and Veteran Services at UMass Amherst emerged from a shared commitment to fostering an inclusive and connected campus environment. Both groups face unique challenges in integrating with the broader student body, making collaboration a strategic approach to building a supportive network. Organizing cross-cultural engagement events provides opportunities for students to interact, share cultural perspectives, and build relationships, enhancing their sense of belonging within the university community (Hale, 2023). Such collaborations reflect the growing recognition that intercultural learning is essential for all students, not just international ones, as domestic students also benefit from exposure to diverse cultural experiences.

Each semester, three cross-cultural engagement events are held at staggered times to accommodate a range of schedules. The first event typically takes place early in the semester (10:00–11:00 a.m.), the second around mid-semester (11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.), and the final event near the end of the term (1:00–2:00 p.m.). Each session lasts approximately one hour and features a rotating set of mingling activities designed to spark conversation and connection. These events are open to the entire campus community and typically attract 50 to 80 participants. While international and veteran students form the core of the group, faculty, staff, and other students are also encouraged to attend, contributing to a rich and varied intercultural experience.



THE MINGLE ACTIVITY: A SIMPLE APPROACH TO COMPLEX CONVERSATIONS

As mentioned, a key feature of our cross-cultural engagement events is mingling activities. At our last event, we offered a “Cultural Word Association” mingle activity. This structured activity facilitated participants’ exploration of cultural topics, sharing of stories, and connection with others in an engaging manner. The activity’s design aimed to promote cultural understanding and community building among participants. As Johnson (2020) suggests, creating spaces for

cross-cultural dialogues in university settings is crucial for engaging diverse student populations and ensuring that students from all backgrounds feel valued and heard.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Cultural Word Association: Mingle Activity

Explore Cultures, Share Stories, and Connect

OBJECTIVE

The goal of the activity is to engage in conversations with multiple people about different cultural topics. Each participant will receive one word associated with culture, along with prompts. Through this activity, participants will connect with others and share insights from various cultural perspectives.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Get Your Word:

Upon arrival, you will receive a word related to culture. This word might be a tradition, food, language, or anything else that is a meaningful part of a culture. General prompts are suggested below, and additional prompts are provided with each word.

2. Find a Partner:

Hold up your word for others to see and find someone you haven't spoken with yet. Ideally, find someone with a word different from yours. Introduce yourselves and discuss the words you have. You'll have 5 minutes to discuss your words. You can use the suggested prompts to guide your conversation.

3. Switch Words:

After speaking with your partner, switch your word with theirs. Now, you will have a new word. Please repeat step one. Continue this process until you have discussed all the words!

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What is the meaning of this word in your culture?
- How is this word celebrated or experienced in your country or community?
- Can you share a personal story or tradition related to this word?

Words: Food, Language, Holiday, Family, Music, Traditions, Fashion, Festivals

1. Food

What is a traditional dish in your culture?

Are there any foods that are important for celebrations or holidays?

2. Language

What language or dialect is spoken in your culture?

Can you teach me a phrase or word that's special in your language?

3. Holiday

What holiday do people in your culture look forward to the most?

How do you celebrate this holiday?

4. Family

What does family mean in your culture?

Do you have any unique family traditions or gatherings?

5. Music

What type of music is most popular in your culture?

Are there any traditional instruments or dances from your country?

6. Traditions

What is a tradition that has been passed down in your family?

Are there any traditions that people from your culture follow on a daily or annual basis?

7. Fashion

Are there any traditional clothing items in your culture?

How does fashion play a role in cultural identity?

8. Festivals

What is a major festival or celebration in your culture?

How do people participate or what is the significance of this festival?

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- **Be Open & Curious:** Ask questions and listen attentively to what your partners share.
- **Be Respectful:** Be mindful that every culture has its own unique values and traditions.
- **Share Your Experiences:** Don't forget to share your own thoughts and experiences about each word.
- **Have Fun:** The goal is to learn, connect, and celebrate cultural diversity!

ENJOY THE MINGLE!

This activity was designed to be simple yet impactful, sparking meaningful conversations and reflections. By engaging in one-on-one exchanges, participants learned about each other's cultures and found common ground. The structured nature of the activity facilitated initial interactions, making it easier for participants to connect. Following the activity, participants were invited to continue their conversations over food, further deepening the connections made during the mingle.



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK: POSITIVE REACTIONS AND INSIGHTS

The feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants expressed increased comfort in interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds. ESL students reported feeling more integrated into the UMass community, while veterans appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from others. One ESL student shared, "I never thought I would connect with veterans, but through these activities, I learned so much about their experiences and cultures. It felt like we were all part of the same community." A veteran commented, "This event gave me a chance to see the world through someone else's eyes. I learned a lot about cultures I had never encountered before, and it made me appreciate the diversity at UMass even more." This aligns with Byram's (2022) assertion that intercultural competence can be developed through direct engagement with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, facilitating deeper empathy and understanding.


ENCOURAGING CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS IN OTHER ACADEMIC SETTINGS

The success of this event highlights the potential of intercultural communication initiatives within academic settings. Faculty members and ESL teachers are encouraged to seek collaborations with other programs, such as Veteran Services, student organizations, or cultural centers, to offer similar opportunities for students to interact and build intercultural competence. These experiences enrich students' understanding of the world and en-



hance their communication and critical thinking skills, essential in today's globalized society. According to Hale (2023), creating intercultural spaces through collaborative events not only promotes social integration but also contributes to the development of a more inclusive campus culture.

CONCLUSION: BRINGING LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

As educators, we often emphasize the importance of intercultural communication within the classroom. However, creating opportunities for students to practice these skills outside formal academic settings is equally important. Intercultural engagement events, such as the one held on March 13th, offer valuable, hands-on experiences that allow students to apply their learning in real-world contexts. By offering structured activities and creating inclusive spaces, we foster deeper connections among students from different backgrounds. These interactions promote mutual respect and understanding, essential for building an inclusive and harmonious community. Through small, intentional efforts, we can continue to encourage meaningful dialogue and learning that transcends the classroom and brings us closer together. 



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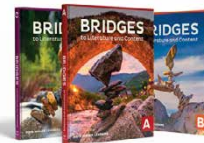
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Review: Truth in the Arrow, Mercy in the Bow: A DIY Manual for the Construction of Stories.

Truth in the Arrow, Mercy in the Bow: A DIY Manual for the Construction of Stories. Steve Almond. Zando. New York. 2024. Pp 234. ISBN 978-1-63893-130-0

review by Eileen Feldman

THIS manual provides a guideline for teachers and students on how to write stories and/or nonfiction by paying attention to obvious and not-so-obvious techniques and skills. While writers need to carefully craft titles and opening paragraphs, among other rhetorical requirements, they need to also allow humor, obsession, disruptive feelings, and writer's block. Steve Almond, currently teacher for Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard and for Wesleyan University, formerly taught creative writing at Emerson College, Boston College, University of North Carolina, Wilmington MFA program, writers' conferences, GrubStreet in Boston, and overseas.


In this manual, his decades of experiences with students' elation and frustration sensitize the teacher to student perspectives and perceptions and students to the painstaking work of choosing correct words. For that reason, both teachers and students will find relevance in this book.

The very first chapter, "By Way of Hello", introduces one of Almond's students in China who, though timid, felt permission to expose her inner wish for a bicycle through powerful storytelling. Although her Chinese classroom teacher was appalled at the assignment and its uselessness, many other Chinese teachers in attendance applauded her. Almond's point was that everybody has a story to tell and an urge to look inside for it. With that anecdote, EL teachers and students can buy in to the universality of the suggestions in his book. His tone is collegial—rather than pedantic—sharing dozens of anecdotes from his classroom and evolving writing career.

In this manual, [Almond's] decades of experiences with students' elation and frustration sensitize the teacher to student perspectives and perceptions and students to the painstaking work of choosing correct words.

Chapters range from Character, Plot, Chronology, Opening Paragraph to Doubt, Obsession, The Inner Life, Workshopping, overdependence on AI crutches. Excerpts and examples from the works of many traditional and contemporary authors (Frank O'Connor, Celeste Ng, Twain, etc.) offer a bibliography of novels, short stories, and poems that can serve as writing models and indeed sophisticated reading materials as well. And recollections from Almond's giving students feedback and their intense reactions to it prove both noteworthy and cautionary.

"Free Writing" prompts preceding most chapters offer lesson plans for quick writing exercises. Such topics as an instance of a student's obsession, physical humiliation, first crush, disequilibrium in life, and small resistance ask for students to realize self-expression.

This manual is not a comprehensive creative writing manual. Nevertheless, it gives teachers permission and tools to guide EL students in creative writing. Many EL students with their wit and insights yearn to venture into this genre to find their English voice. 

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Eileen Feldman is a teacher of ELL at Bunker Hill Community College. My students are a source of surprise and amazement.



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