

Instructional Coaching for Language-Integrated Tier 1 Pedagogy in Multilingual Classrooms

Team Members: Margarita Mendez, Virginia Franchini, Marta Luján,
Megan Dreher, Bethany Fields



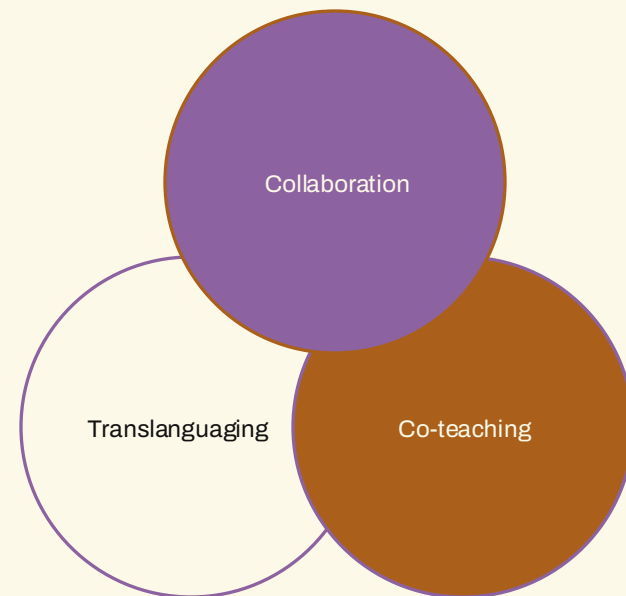
Research question

How do coaching cycles support classroom teachers in developing and implementing a language-integrated curriculum and pedagogy to support English language acquisition?

Literature Review

IN PROGRESS

The increasing linguistic diversity within international schools has created a growing need for effective pedagogical approaches that support young multilingual learners in acquiring English alongside curriculum content. In early childhood settings, language development is closely connected to social interaction, play, and meaningful classroom experiences, placing significant responsibility on teachers to create language-rich learning environments. However, implementing language-integrated pedagogy requires specialized knowledge and sustained professional support, particularly in multilingual classrooms where children demonstrate varying levels of English proficiency. Instructional coaching has emerged as a collaborative form of professional development that may support teachers in refining pedagogical practices through reflection, observation, feedback, and ongoing dialogue. This literature review explores existing research related to early childhood English language acquisition, language-integrated curriculum and pedagogy, and instructional coaching, with particular attention to how coaching cycles may support teachers in implementing language-supportive practices within an international school context.



Research on multilingual pedagogy increasingly positions translanguaging as an essential practice for supporting multilingual learners' academic and linguistic development. Translanguaging allows students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires during learning, promoting deeper comprehension, participation, and identity affirmation within classroom settings (García & Wei, 2014). Educators in recent studies largely expressed positive attitudes toward students' use of translanguaging practices; however, teachers demonstrated less confidence in using translanguaging themselves during instruction. This tension suggests that while multilingualism may be theoretically valued in schools, educators may require additional professional learning and institutional support to effectively implement language-integrated instructional practices.

Research on translanguaging in multilingual classrooms further suggests that language-integrated pedagogies can positively influence both language development and academic achievement. Chaika (2023) found that translanguaging practices facilitated meaningful communication, scaffolded comprehension, and created supportive learning environments in which students could access complex academic content through their full linguistic repertoires. Students demonstrated increased motivation and classroom participation because translanguaging enabled them to connect their home languages with the language of instruction, allowing them to express complex ideas with greater confidence. Furthermore, translanguaging supported content understanding across subject areas, as teachers used students' linguistic resources to contextualize explanations and strengthen conceptual comprehension. These findings indicate that translanguaging practices not only promote language acquisition but also improve multilingual learners' access to rigorous academic content within Tier 1 instruction.

Chaika (2023) further emphasized that translanguaging challenges traditional monolingual approaches to teaching by recognizing language practices as fluid, dynamic, and interconnected, rather than separated into rigid linguistic boundaries. This perspective aligns with García and Wei's (2014) conceptualization of translanguaging as a holistic process through which multilingual learners draw upon their complete linguistic repertoires to construct meaning and engage in learning. Similarly, multilingual education frameworks view students' home languages as assets that contribute to academic success rather than barriers to learning (Cummins, 2007). By validating linguistic diversity and promoting additive bilingualism, translanguaging pedagogies contribute to inclusive learning environments that support students' cognitive, social, emotional, and academic development.

The study also highlighted important implications for instructional practice and professional learning. Chaika (2023) noted that understanding both the benefits and challenges associated with translanguaging implementation can inform professional development initiatives and educational policy decisions aimed at creating more inclusive multilingual classrooms. The findings suggest that teachers may require additional support in implementing translanguaging practices effectively, particularly in balancing language integration with curriculum expectations. Consequently, professional learning structures such as instructional coaching, collaborative planning, and targeted professional development may play an important role in supporting educators' adoption of language-responsive pedagogies within multilingual Tier 1 classrooms.

Research on teacher collaboration highlights its critical role in supporting multilingual learners and improving instructional practices across schools. Davison's (2006) study on collaboration between ESL and content teachers emphasizes that effective partnership teaching extends beyond simple co-teaching and instead involves long-term curriculum planning, shared professional development, and institutional support. According to Davison (2006), successful collaboration requires several essential conditions, including a clear conceptualization of collaborative goals, explicit incorporation of ESL objectives into curriculum planning, shared understandings of teacher roles and responsibilities, common planning processes, and systematic evaluation mechanisms. These collaborative structures help ensure that language development becomes integrated into mainstream instruction rather than isolated through pull-out support models.

Davison (2006) further argued that effective collaboration is difficult to sustain without strong administrative support, structured planning time, and opportunities for relationship-building among educators. The study revealed that ESL teachers were generally more positive about collaborative practices than classroom teachers, although both groups acknowledged the value of shared expertise and ongoing negotiation of responsibilities. Importantly, the findings suggested that collaboration develops gradually through stages of teacher growth and increasing professional confidence. However, institutional barriers such as departmental divisions and what McMillan (1994) described as the "Balkanisation of teaching" often limit collaboration across disciplines and reduce teachers' capacity to work collectively toward whole-school goals.

Collaboration has similarly emerged as a critical component of effective multilingual education. Research demonstrates that collaborative partnerships between classroom teachers and multilingual learning specialists contribute positively to students' language development, academic achievement, and social-emotional inclusion.

Similarly, Hargreaves (2019) examined over three decades of research on teacher collaboration and concluded that collaborative cultures significantly contribute to student achievement, teacher development, and school improvement. Hargreaves argued that schools characterized by collaboration demonstrate stronger outcomes in literacy and mathematics compared to schools rooted in individualistic teaching cultures. The author identified several persistent barriers to collaboration, including presentism, conservatism, and teacher isolation, which often prevent schools from engaging in meaningful instructional change. While collaborative structures such as professional learning communities (PLCs), collaborative inquiry, lesson study, and instructional rounds have become increasingly common, Hargreaves noted that much teacher collaboration remains superficial, focusing primarily on sharing resources rather than engaging in deeper instructional reflection and collective problem-solving.

A major theme emerging from Hargreaves' work is that structural change alone is insufficient without “reculturing” schools through collaborative leadership and shared professional purpose. Effective collaboration depends not only on time allocation but also on leadership practices that empower teachers, promote collective responsibility, and foster trust among staff members. Hargreaves further introduced the concept of professional capital, which includes human capital, decisional capital, and social capital, emphasizing that teacher expertise develops through ongoing collaboration, coaching, and professional learning over time. Collaborative professionalism, therefore, becomes essential for sustaining educational improvement and responding effectively to diverse student needs. These studies demonstrate that collaboration is a foundational component of effective multilingual education and instructional improvement. Both Davison and Hargreaves emphasize that meaningful collaboration requires institutional support, shared goals, ongoing professional learning, and leadership structures that encourage collective responsibility for student success. Their findings are particularly relevant for multilingual classrooms, where integrated approaches between ESL specialists and classroom teachers can strengthen Tier 1 instruction and create more inclusive learning environments for multilingual learners.

Honigsfeld and Nordmeyer (2020) further emphasized the importance of co-teaching and collaboration in supporting multilingual learners within inclusive classroom settings. The authors argued that multilingual learners cannot wait to develop full proficiency in English before engaging with grade-level curriculum; instead, content and language instruction must occur simultaneously (Mohan et al., 2001). This perspective reinforces the importance of language-integrated Tier 1 instruction, where classroom teachers and English Language Development specialists share responsibility for supporting both academic and linguistic growth.

The authors highlighted growing evidence that collaborative instructional approaches are more effective than isolated or segregated support models for multilingual learners. Rather than relying solely on pull-out services, meaningful collaboration allows educators to jointly plan instruction, assess student learning, reflect on teaching practices, and develop shared instructional goals. Honigsfeld and Nordmeyer (2020) argued that collaborative practices strengthen teachers' collective efficacy, or the shared belief that together they can positively impact multilingual learners' success. Drawing on Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), the authors further noted that collaboration within trusting professional environments encourages teachers to engage in inquiry, reflection, risk-taking, and collaborative problem-solving.

Importantly, the study identified practical structures necessary to support effective collaboration. Teachers were encouraged to engage in collaborative planning processes that included co-developing instructional routines, designing lessons with integrated content and language objectives, selecting accommodations based on students' linguistic needs, and creating formative and summative assessments collaboratively. At the leadership level, the authors emphasized the need for common planning time, schoolwide expectations for co-planning, access to curricular resources, and sustained professional development, coaching, and instructional support. These findings suggest that successful collaboration in multilingual classrooms depends not only on teacher willingness but also on systemic leadership structures that prioritize ongoing professional learning and shared instructional responsibility.

Methodology

The data will be analysed thematically to identify: shifts in teacher planning for language changes in classroom pedagogy

- Interactions between students and teachers, student work, audios from students, lessons. Plan Tier 1 (language-integrated teaching)
- Collaborative document (Data sources)
- Reflective journals, observations, learning walks, students journals. (Data collection)
- Teacher confidence and language awareness
- Alignment between intended Enacted Tier 1 Practice (analysis)

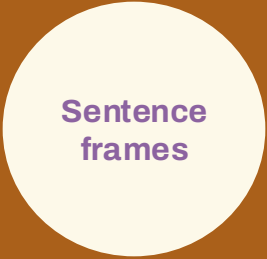


Anchor Books

- Repeated exposure to the same text across the week supported children's engagement, participation, and familiarity with key vocabulary and story structures. This strengthened comprehension and language use within meaningful contexts.
- An additional finding highlighted the value of extending anchor books beyond the classroom by sharing the selected texts with families. This enabled children to access the stories in their home languages, supporting connections between home and school language practices and encouraging multilingual participation in literacy experiences.
- The findings also suggested that while some anchor books effectively supported language-integrated learning experiences, greater consistency in text selection was needed. Teachers identified the importance of developing a clearer year-long framework or guide for selecting anchor books that align with language objectives, student needs, and curricular themes. Furthermore, the implementation process emphasized the need to intentionally incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to ensure that literacy experiences remained accessible and inclusive for all learners.

Findings

While we are still in the process of analyzing our data and classroom observations, these examples offer a glimpse into some of the emerging findings from our youngest learners. Initial observations suggest that visual language supports and intentional sentence structures are already helping students engage more confidently with academic language, communication, and classroom participation.

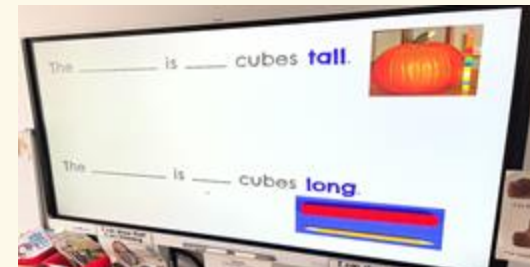
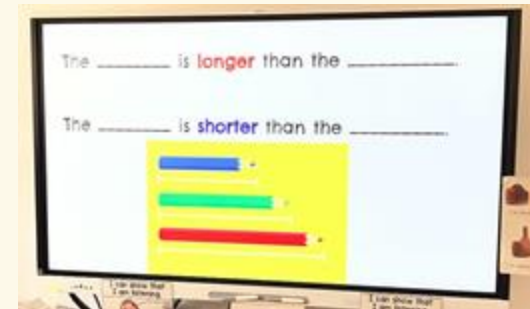
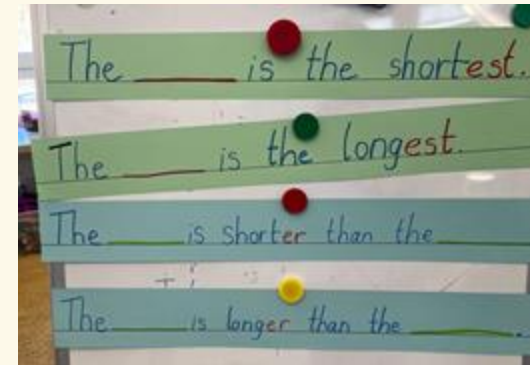


Sentence frames

- Increased student participation and confidence in using English during classroom interactions.
- Structured language supports such as “I like” and “I don’t like” provided accessible opportunities for communication.
- Teachers supported comprehension through visuals, gestures, modeling, translation tools, and multilingual staff support.
- Visual and concrete supports helped non-verbal and emerging multilingual learners participate meaningfully in discussions.
- Repeated exposure and modeling supported students’ understanding and use of more complex sentence structures.
- Videos, peer modeling, and revisiting sentence frames increased student motivation and confidence.
- Teachers initially found sentence frames restrictive, but later recognized their value in supporting oral language and classroom participation.
- Visible sentence stems, mentor texts, and modeled examples supported students in transferring oral language into classroom learning experiences.

Evidence

Teachers began intentionally introducing sentence structures through visual supports displayed throughout the classroom environment. These visual guides provided students with accessible language models that they could read, reference, and revisit independently during learning activities. By making language visible, students were able to connect ideas, reflect on their thinking, and build confidence in using academic language across classroom interactions and tasks.



Evidence

- Function: The Language of Argument: Agreement and Disagreement
Tier 1

Evidence of students' developing use of the language function of agreement and disagreement was also observed during Tier 1 learning experiences in which children created personal books to express their likes, dislikes, and wants using targeted sentence structures. Students used sentence frames to communicate preferences and graphically represented their responses through drawings and visual representations. These activities provided opportunities for students to connect oral language with early writing and visual communication while practicing meaningful language structures within a personalized and engaging context.



Discussion

Reflections about the research

Looking forward

Frankfurt International School is committed to strengthening language-integrated Tier 1 instruction across all primary classrooms.

- ELA teachers will serve as instructional coaches to support classroom teachers.
- Coaching cycles will promote collaboration, co-planning, and language-responsive pedagogy.
- Tier 1 instruction will provide multilingual learners with greater access to academic content.
- FIS continues to celebrate and support its diverse and language-rich student community through inclusive instructional practices.

References

- Chaika, O. (2023). *Translanguaging in multilingual classrooms: A case study analysis*. *Philological Review*, 1(21), 127–135. <https://doi.org/10.31499/2415-8828.1.2023.281366>
- Davison, C. (2006). Collaboration between ESL and content teachers: How do we know when we are doing it right? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(4), 454–475. <https://doi.org/10.2167/beb339.0>
- Hargreaves, A. (2019). Teacher collaboration: 30 years of research on its nature, forms, limitations and effects. *Teachers and Teaching*, 25(5), 603–621. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1639499>
- Honigsfeld, A., & Nordmeyer, J. (2020). Better together: Evidence for co-teaching and collaboration in today's classrooms. *AAIE InterEd Journal*, 48, 129–136.

And more to be added later.