



Spaces for Two Languages

Collaborative Classroom Environments in DLI Programs



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RESEARCH QUESTION

What aspects of the classroom environment support collaboration among DLI learners?





LITERATURE REVIEW 1

The Power of Science–Bustamante, A. S., Greenfield, D. B., & Nayfeld, I. (2018)

This article emphasizes the importance of integrating science learning in early education to foster curiosity, inquiry skills, and critical thinking in young learners. It highlights how hands-on, meaningful science experiences can engage children and support language development, especially when connected to students' real-world experiences.



LITERATURE REVIEW 2

Kindergarten Through Grade 3: Developing Biliteracy With Intentional Support: Using interactive Word Walls and Paired Learning—Alanis, I., Salinas-Gonzalez, I., & Arreguín-Anderson, M. G. (2015).

This article explains how intentional supports—such as interactive word walls and structured paired learning—can help young students develop biliteracy skills from kindergarten through grade 3. It highlights practical classroom strategies that promote vocabulary development, student interaction, and meaningful connections between languages to strengthen both reading and writing.



LITERATURE REVIEW 3

Making Space for Multilingualism: Using Translanguaging Pedagogies to Disrupt Monolingual Language Ideologies within a Culturally Responsive Kindergarten Curriculum–McClain, J. B., & Schrod, K. (2021)

This article argues that using translanguaging pedagogies in kindergarten allows children to draw on all their language resources, helping to challenge traditional monolingual ideologies in early education. It demonstrates how a culturally responsive curriculum can intentionally create space for multilingual practices, supporting identity development and more inclusive, equitable learning environments.



LITERATURE REVIEW 4

Honoring and Building on the Rich Literacy Practices of Young Bilingual and Multilingual Learners -Souto-Manning, M. (2016)

This article highlights the importance of recognizing and building on the existing literacy practices that young bilingual and multilingual learners bring from their homes and communities. It emphasizes asset-based teaching approaches that validate students' linguistic and cultural identities while strengthening their language and literacy development in school.



METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Survey Research:

- We collaborated to design the survey process and develop the survey questions.
 - Survey to Primary and Secondary teachers Pre-K to Grade 12
- We distributed the survey to nine immersion schools across Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, and the United States.
 - 11 total respondents (plus one Head of DLI)
 - 82% (9/11) have 10+ years of DLI experience — a highly seasoned group
- Immersion models: 50/50 (4), 80/20 (3), 100% immersion (1), mixed/both (2)
- We analyzed the collected data and discussed key findings and insights.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Photo/word cards and sentence stems are the most frequently used visual supports

What are your most used visual supports present in your classroom?

● Dual-language labels/signage	3
● Photo/word cards	6
● Sentence stems or talk prompts	5
● Learning target displays in both languages	3
● Visual schedules	5
● Other	0

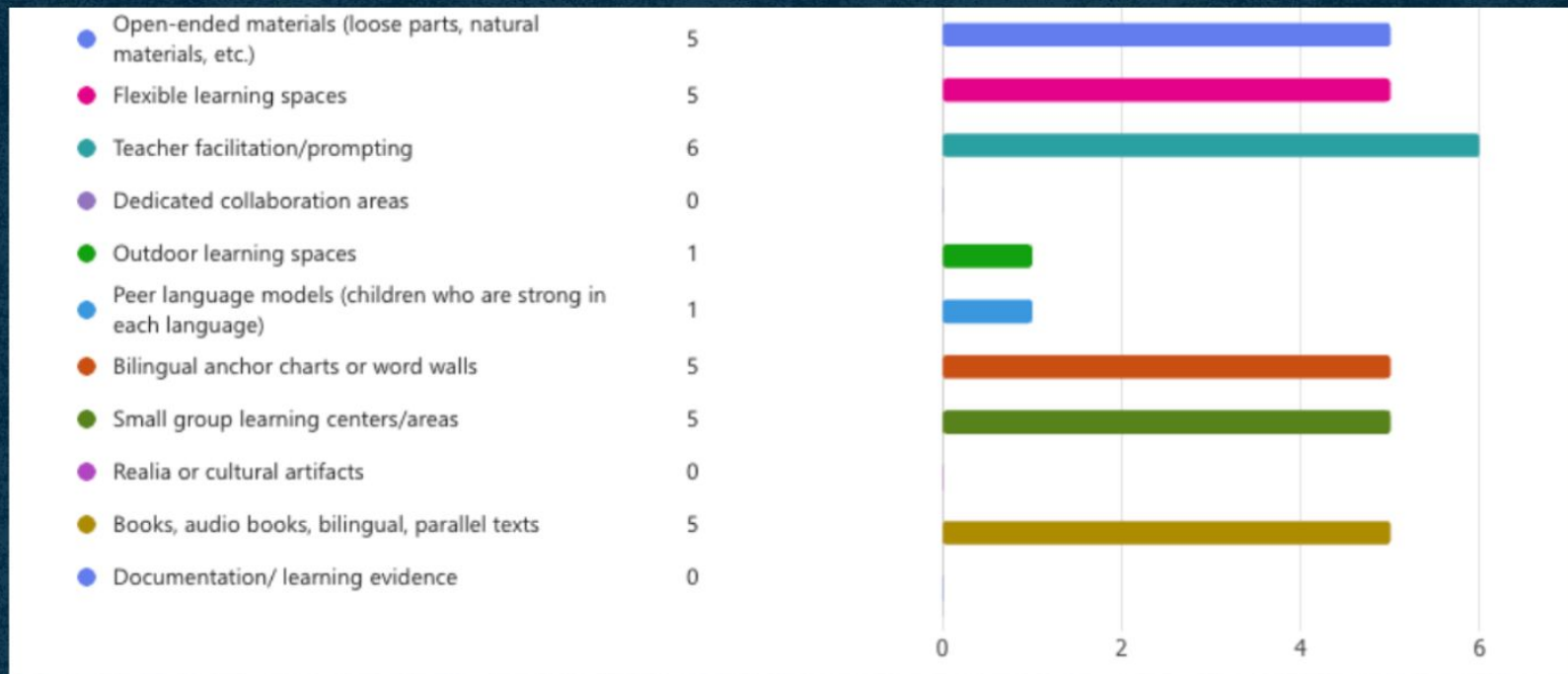




SURVEY FINDINGS

Environmental supports include open-ended materials, loose parts, natural materials, and flexible spaces. Bilingual anchor charts, word walls, and small group learning centers present

What environmental factors most support collaboration among DLI learners?





SURVEY FINDINGS

Student agency and translanguageing observed throughout collaborative learning activities

Which aspects of your classroom environment most successfully support collaboration among DLI learners?

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Responses

5 respondents (45%) answered language for this question.

[Update](#)

A word cloud visualization of responses to the survey question. The word 'language' is the largest and most central. Other prominent words include 'vocabulary in both languages', 'students', 'Routines ; 3Language Supports', 'language supports', 'responsive environment', 'Supports and Scaffolds', 'interaction routines', 'students have the agency', 'parts and bookmaking', 'Norms and Classroom', 'engagement class', 'Dual language', 'wall', 'Purposeful language', and 'language schedule'.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Bilingual documentation and portfolios made learning visible and measurable

How is student learning visible in your classroom? (for example, bilingual documentation, photos, learning stories, documentation panels, student work displays, digital portfolios)

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Responses

5 respondents (63%) answered student work for this question.

A word cloud visualization of responses to the question 'How is student learning visible in your classroom?'. The words are arranged in a cloud shape, with 'student work' being the largest and most central term. Other prominent terms include 'work display', 'projects', 'digital portfolio', 'Learner portfolios', 'presented bilingually', 'teachers', 'summative projects', 'portfolio', 'not just products', 'Chinese components', 'regularly displayed', 'language use', 'displays and projects', 'Audio and video', 'Labels', 'Bilingual documentations', and 'key vocabulary'.

English digital portfolio
summative projects
portfolio
not just products
Chinese components
regularly displayed
language use
displays and projects
Audio and video
Learner portfolios
student work
work display
presented bilingually
teachers
projects
key vocabulary
Labels
Bilingual documentations



SURVEY FINDINGS

Challenges Identified

Uneven language proficiency among students
Cognitive overload and limited tier 3 academic language
Student motivation (especially at the secondary level)
Managing translanguaging productively vs. unintended code-switching
Lack of focus/attention in young learners during collaboration

What challenges do you notice when encouraging collaboration across languages in young children?

5 respondents (56%) answered language for this question.

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Responses

A word cloud visualization of responses to the survey question. The word 'language' is the most prominent, appearing in the center in a large, bold, black font. Other words are arranged around it in various sizes and orientations, mostly in blue. The words include: 'Load ; 4', 'Quality of Peer', 'challenge', 'language learners', 'languages in one sentence', 'Cognitive overload', 'Translanguaging Productively', 'language use', 'tasks', 'lack of motivation', 'language proficiency', 'school immersion', 'Language ; 3', 'Cognitive', 'academic language', 'Language Proficiency ; 2', 'effectiveness of the instructions', 'understanding of the tasks', and 'scaffolding in task'.



DISCUSSION

Scaffolding Unlocks Access

Language supports give every student a way into the conversation

Environment Shapes Culture

The way a room is arranged shapes how students work together

Translanguaging as Asset

Bilingual language choice deepens peer learning and identity

Structure Enables Authenticity

Predictable structures give students the confidence to share

Scaffolding Matters

Curriculum design addresses uneven proficiency through intentional support

Documentation Affirms Identity

Bilingual portfolios celebrate who students are and connect home and school



REFLECTIONS ABOUT RESEARCH

What we learned about the research process...

As a team, we learned the importance of clear collaboration and role-sharing when designing survey questions, ensuring that they aligned with our research focus on dual language classroom spaces. Working together also helped us refine our thinking and interpret data from multiple perspectives, leading to more balanced and meaningful conclusions.

As individuals, we gained a deeper understanding of how to design effective surveys, collect data from diverse contexts, and analyze responses critically. We also learned that research is an iterative process. It requires flexibility, careful interpretation of limited data, and thoughtful reflection to connect findings back to real classroom practices in DLI programs.



LOOKING FORWARD

Next Steps for Team:

Refine and expand the survey to include more schools
Apply findings to improve DLI classroom environments
Continue the inquiry cycle (implement, observe, reflect)

Next Steps for Individual Growth:

Strengthen research (engage with professional literature) and data analysis skills
Connect findings with colleagues and the wider professional community to gain more feedback
Collaborate and team share learning



THANK YOU