

Translanguaging in PreK

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Research question

What It Looks Like, How We Are Doing, and What Comes Next



The Core Inquiry

To what extent does translanguageing practice impact the learning experience and sense of belonging for PreK students in our current context?

What is Translanguaging?

Core Principles

- ✓ Using all of a child's languages to communicate and learn.
- ✓ Children move between languages naturally.
- ✓ Supports meaning-making and participation.
- ✓ Values students' full identities.

Examples in PreK

- 👤 Greeting in multiple languages
- 🚗 Mixing languages during play
- 💬 Answering in home language
- 📖 Multilingual labels and books
- 👤 Teacher assistant uses host country language to support EAL children

Literature Review: Summary of Article

Translanguaging & School Belonging

DeNicolò (2019)

The role of translanguaging in establishing school belonging for emergent multilinguals

- Translanguaging helped students feel like active members of the classroom community.
- Home language acted as a bridge for learning new concepts and participating confidently.
- Students used multiple languages to ask questions, clarify meaning, and strengthen understanding.
- Teachers who validated students' cultures and home experiences strengthened emotional connection and belonging.

Key Idea

Belonging grows when children feel their language and culture are welcomed and valued at school.

Translanguaging • School Belonging • Emotional Connection • Cultural Validation

Literature Review: Summary of Article

Agency, Voice & Participation

Aleksić & García (2024)

Translanguaging in early childhood education: Agency, identity, and belonging

- Young children naturally use multiple languages during play and social interactions.
- Translanguaging helped children move from “silent outsiders” to confident storytellers and leaders.
- Children used flexible language practices to negotiate rules, solve problems, and collaborate during play.
- Classrooms that value multilingualism increase participation and create stronger peer connections.

Key Idea

When children can use all of their languages, they develop confidence, voice, and agency within the classroom community.

Agency • Voice • Participation • Translanguaging • Identity • Belonging

Literature Review: Summary of Article

Identity, Funds of Knowledge & Belonging

Riojas-Cortez & Pérez-González (2024)

Funds of knowledge and identity in the early childhood classroom

- Children feel a stronger sense of belonging when their identities, languages, and home experiences are reflected in the classroom.
- “Funds of Knowledge” refers to the cultural knowledge, traditions, and experiences children bring from home.
- Translanguaging helped children connect home experiences to school-based learning tasks.
- Spaces such as dramatic play areas can become “translanguaging spaces” where children affirm their identities daily.

Key Idea

Honoring children’s cultures and experiences strengthens both learning and emotional connection to school.

Identity • Funds of Knowledge • Belonging • Translanguaging

Literature Review: Summary of Article

Emotional Safety & Learning

Back, Han, & Weng (2020)

Emotional scaffolding and translanguaging in a dual language preschool

- Children felt safer and more connected when able to express emotions in their home language.
- Translanguaging supported emotional regulation and helped children remain engaged in learning.
- Teachers who welcomed home language created stronger emotional bonds with students.
- Emotional safety allowed children to remain in a “learning state” rather than an anxious or withdrawn state.

Key Idea

Language is deeply connected to emotional well-being, safety, and readiness to learn.

Overall Research Connections

Across the Research:

- Translanguaging increases student engagement.
- Home languages support academic growth.
- Multilingual classrooms strengthen belonging and identity.
- Young children naturally use multiple languages during play.
- Teachers who value home language increase confidence and participation.

Overall findings:

Translanguaging is not simply about language use. It is connected to identity, emotional safety, participation, belonging, and learning in early childhood classrooms.

References

DeNicolo, C. P. (2019). *The role of translanguaging in establishing school belonging for emergent multilinguals*. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23(9), 967–984.

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García, O. (2009). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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Methodology

Setting

PreK classroom

Participants

Students, Families / Parents

Data Sources



Parent surveys



**Classroom
observations**



**Videos of student
interactions**



**Classroom
environment
evidence**

Data Analysis

Data was reviewed for patterns related to translanguageing:



Student Behaviors

- Use of multiple languages by children



Environment & Inclusion

- Family perceptions of inclusion
- Visible multilingual materials



Pedagogy & Culture

- Teacher language practices
- Cultural representation in classroom

Findings: Classroom Evidence

Evidence of translanguageing observed in the PreK classroom environment:



Social Interactions

- Morning greetings in multiple languages
- Children switching languages during play
- Students helping translate for peers



Environment & Signs

- Family languages visible in labels and classroom signs
- Classroom environment reflects multilingualism

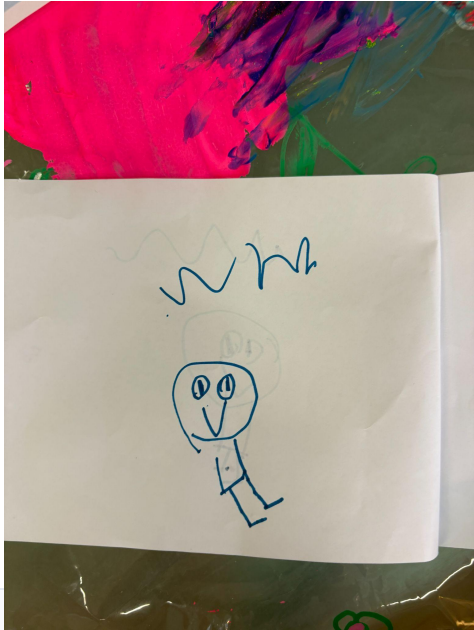


Culture & Routines

- Cultural celebrations and traditions included in curriculum
- Multilingual songs integrated into school curriculum

Evidence of Translanguaging

Student Writing

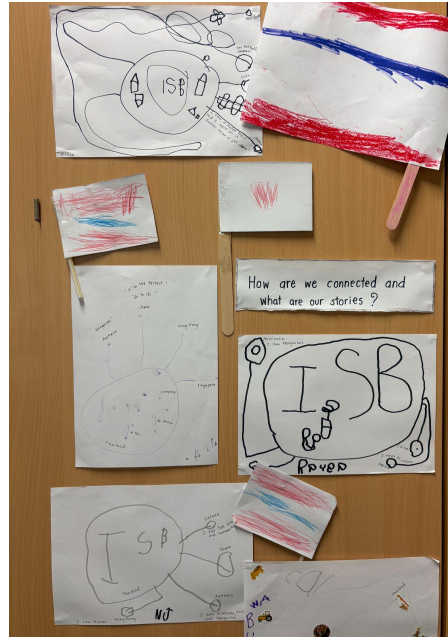


Home Country Celebrations

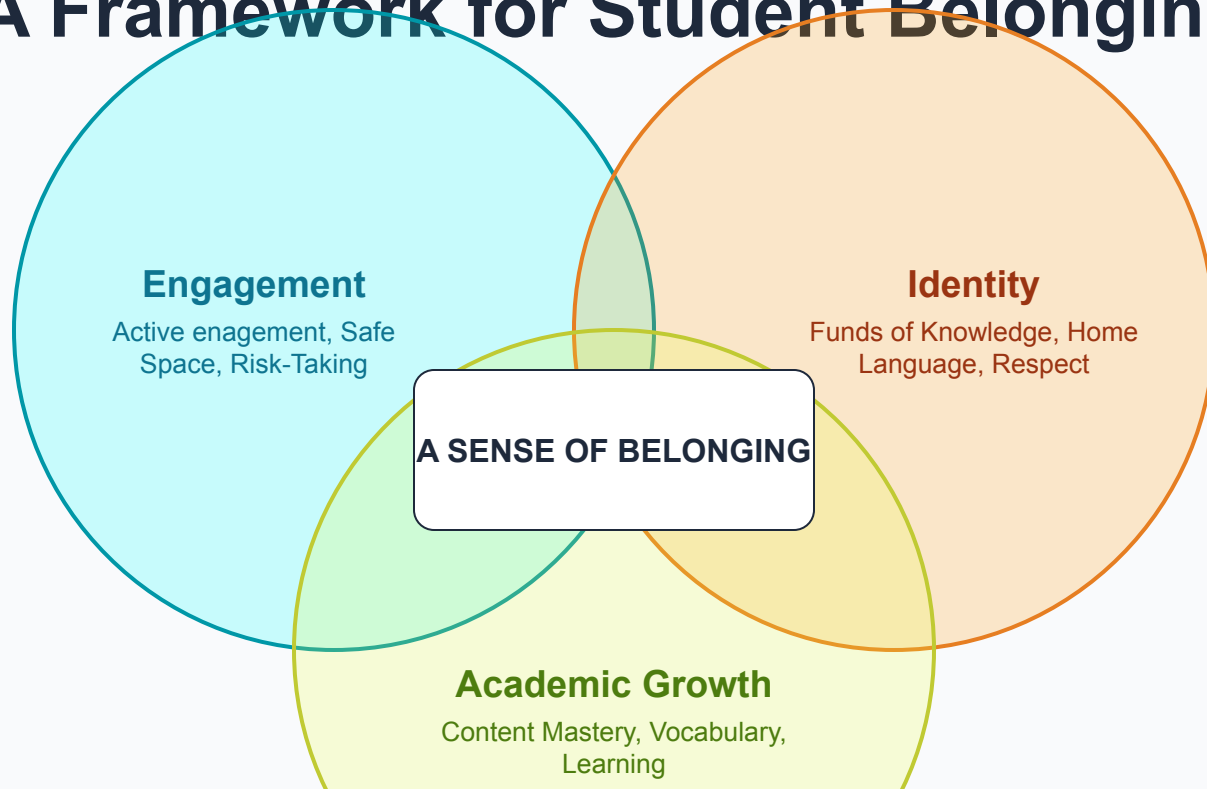


Evidence of Translanguaging

Writing in other languages



A Framework for Student Belonging



When identity, engagement, and growth overlap, students are fully present and developing their sense of belonging.

Findings: Parent Survey Results

Families Reported Noticing:

-  Multiple languages displayed in classroom
-  Respect for home languages
-  Cultural traditions recognized
-  Positive sense of belonging

Suggested Growth Areas:

-  More multilingual books
-  More family language sharing and communication in home languages

Discussion

These findings matter because:

- ✓ Young children learn best when identity is valued.
- ✓ Home language is an asset, not a barrier.
- ✓ Translanguaging builds confidence and inclusion.

What Comes Next?

Next Steps for My Classroom

- ✓ Add more multilingual books
- ✓ Increase labels in student home languages
- ✓ Continue to invite families to share their language/culture
- ✓ Continue to use intentional translanguageing during lessons
- ✓ Continue observing student language use

Key Takeaways & Reflection

What I Learned

- **Natural Ability:** Children naturally translanguage.
- **Family Awareness:** Families notice inclusive practices.
- **Belonging:** Small changes create stronger belonging.
- **Intentionality:** Translanguaging should be intentional in PreK classrooms.

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Final Thought

"When children can use all of their languages, they feel seen, valued, and ready to learn."

Key Takeaways & Reflection

Challenge: Documentation

Capturing translanguaging in PreK is difficult as it is primarily **verbal, fluid, and momentary**.

Natural Evidence:

- Spontaneous play & dramatic play
- Peer conversations & greetings
- Social problem-solving
- Book-making & environment signs

Reflection: Parent Feedback

Surveys faced limited participation and depth despite attempts at simplicity. This highlights the need for more direct engagement strategies.

Looking Ahead:

 Translate surveys into home languages

 Conduct one-on-one parent conversations