

Enacting Translanguaging Pedagogy through Informal Family Research: Preparing Elementary Preservice Teachers for Linguistic Justice with Refugee and Immigrant Children

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Abstract

Teacher education needs to prepare preservice teachers (PSTs) to develop linguistic justice and support the multilingual needs of all students. This article describes a qualitative study in which PSTs enacted an informal multilingual family research project to implement translanguaging pedagogy, creating learning experiences where students can validate their identities through learning in their home languages. Translanguaging remains a challenge for PSTs who have been trained in monolingual instructional norms. In this study, PSTs took on the roles of both researchers and teachers in a literacy methods course: observing immigrant families in an informal setting (a children's museum), reflecting on language use in home and community contexts, and designing lesson plans that incorporated translanguaging approaches. The study drew on field notes, reflective essays, and lesson plans to explore two questions: (1) How does engaging in a multilingual family research project shape PSTs' understanding of translanguaging pedagogy and their views of home language and cultural practices as learning assets? (2) How do PSTs apply translanguaging strategies in lesson planning after participating in multilingual family research? Findings showed the study facilitated PSTs to perceive translanguaging as a pedagogical stance and see home languages as legitimate resources for learning. However, some PSTs still struggled to reconceptualize home languages as anything more than a support mechanism in instruction. The study provides evidence that raciolinguistic ideologies must be challenged within teacher education, and that PSTs must be supported to maintain translanguaging practices to advance educational equity for refugee and immigrant children.

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Introduction

Refugee and immigrant children in elementary school classrooms around the world bring a wealth of multilingual knowledge that is frequently under-

appreciated. Their academic achievement and well-being in school depend on pedagogies that respect and make use of their entire linguistic repertoire. For these students, translanguaging pedagogy offers a transformative, culture- and language-sustaining approach (Paris & Alim, 2017) that honors students' identities while challenging inequitable linguistic hierarchies. Translanguaging refers to the use of two or more languages by an individual speaker and is the active process by which learners access the combined linguistic resources at their disposal to make meaning. According to studies (Capstick & Ateek, 2021; García & Li, 2014), translanguaging reduces language anxiety, boosts students' confidence, and creates opportunities for more active participation in class for all learners. It acts as a corridor to more equitable pedagogical approaches, providing safe spaces for multilingual learners to build their sense of self and belonging. For refugee students especially, who often face trauma and displacement, translanguaging spaces (Li, 2011) can serve as "safe spaces" in classrooms for positive identity development and meaningful engagement. Moreover, translanguaging is inherently multimodal and multi-sensory. As Li (2018) emphasizes, bilingual communication spans not only languages but also gestures, visuals, and other non-verbal modes. Embracing this multimodality contributes to an inclusive environment where all means of meaning-making are valued.

Translanguaging holds great promise, yet it represents a fundamental departure from most teachers' training in monolingual pedagogical norms. Many prospective teachers lack exposure to linguistic diversity and may unknowingly maintain raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017) by unconsciously privileging "standard" English while stigmatizing other languages or dialects as deficient. Such ideologies can lead educators to see multilingualism as a liability rather than an asset, or to use students' home languages only sparingly as a scaffold toward "standard" English. Indeed, prior studies (e.g., Beauchemin et al., 2024; Burton et al., 2024) have found that preservice teachers (PSTs) may agree in theory that students' bilingualism is beneficial, while still enacting English-only, "language separation" practices in the classroom due to deep-seated beliefs and systemic pressures. It is then an urgent challenge for teacher education to prepare new teachers to take full advantage of translanguaging.

One promising means of addressing this challenge is to connect PSTs more directly with the language practices of students' families and communities. Decades of research on funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005) and culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017) have documented transformative shifts in teacher beliefs when teachers learn from families,

seeing students' home experiences through an asset-based lens rather than a deficit lens (da Silva Iddings, 2016). In recent years, researchers have built on these ideas by exploring how translanguaging practices in home and community settings (Choi, 2022, 2024; Kwon, 2022) can inform classroom teaching. For instance, in our own prior research we found that multilingual families seamlessly integrate languages and modalities in everyday learning activities in informal settings like museums (Choi, 2022). This intermingling of languages across modes provided rich examples of how families use diverse semiotic resources to create learning opportunities for their children. Through observation and analysis of such community contexts, PSTs can begin to see children's home language practices as contextualized, purposeful, and integral to meaning-making rather than peripheral to "academic" learning.

The current study builds on a unique model of literacy teacher preparation that involves PSTs in community-based learning (e.g., Cárdenas Curiel et al., 2024). We used a multiphase informal family research project, the Family Learning Observation and Analysis (FLOA) project, to engage a cohort of nine elementary PSTs in developing their understanding of translanguaging pedagogy. As part of our work, PSTs observed immigrant families during visits to a local children's museum to learn how children use all of their linguistic and cultural repertoires with their families to construct learning experiences beyond school. The PSTs then engaged in guided reflection and discussion, drawing connections from these observations to their instructional planning. In this way, instead of passively receiving knowledge about translanguaging and linguistic justice in a university classroom, the PSTs were actively constructing such knowledge through participation in research on multilingual family literacy.

Our work emphasizes the importance of developing curricula that tie research and teaching together and balance fieldwork in both classrooms and communities in teacher preparation. We explore family learning research as a catalyst for PSTs' conceptual and pedagogical growth, building on literature about community-based teacher education (Moll et al., 1992) by explicitly connecting it to translanguaging. We aim to showcase how a literacy methods curriculum designed with a focus on asset-based pedagogies and research involvement can enable future teachers to enact linguistic justice for refugee and immigrant children in classrooms. We address the following research questions:

1. How does engaging in multilingual family research shape preservice teachers' understanding of translanguaging pedagogy, and their views of home language and cultural practices as learning assets?
2. How do preservice teachers apply translanguaging strategies in lesson

planning after participating in multilingual family research?

To address these questions, we examine how the FLOA project contributed to changes in PSTs' knowledge, beliefs, and instructional decisions. Our findings shed light on the learning processes PSTs undergo when they are encouraged to learn from multilingual families. We argue that this approach helps novice teachers move beyond theoretical recognition of bilingualism toward concrete, justice-oriented pedagogical actions.

Although our project has been implemented iteratively over multiple semesters, this study reports solely on the Fall 2024 implementation (the second iteration). This iteration featured a fully developed version of the FLOA project, incorporating targeted scaffolds (e.g., explicit moment-analysis protocols, structured data discussions, and extended reflection activities) that were added based on lessons from the initial pilot. By narrowing our analysis to this implementation, we provide a deeper examination of PSTs' practice-based engagement with translanguaging pedagogy.

Theoretical and Empirical Background

Translanguaging Pedagogy and Linguistic Justice

Translanguaging has been conceptualized as the practice of going beyond and between named languages to maximize learners' participation and meaning-making (García & Li, 2014). Translanguaging pedagogy recognizes and embraces the full range of linguistic resources that bilingual and multilingual students use to communicate and learn. It aligns with a dynamic view of bilingualism (Hornberger, 1989), as opposed to additive models that simply stack a second language on top of the first. By bridging divides between languages, translanguaging inverts the monoglossic language ideology that only the dominant language is worthy of use in the classroom. In doing so, it challenges hierarchies of language practice and necessarily promotes linguistic justice. When teachers encourage students to fluidly use their home languages alongside English, they do more than facilitate comprehension, affirming students' identities and cultures.

Increasingly, research in multilingual education views translanguaging as a pathway to equity. For example, García and Leiva (2014) suggest translanguaging can be transformative by disrupting classroom power relations and giving agency to those marginalized learners. Similarly, Herrera (2023) finds that preservice teachers in California recognized that embracing translanguaging was part of their "continued effort toward transforming education and seeking to eradicate systemic injustices in schools" (p. 610). Thus, translanguaging pedagogy is not only a set of instructional strategies, but also a powerful

commitment to linguistic inclusiveness and the educational rights of minoritized children.

Translanguaging provides critical socio-emotional support for refugee and immigrant students whose schooling histories may be discontinuous and whose home languages are typically under-acknowledged in host-country schools. In classrooms with refugee students, the deliberate creation of translanguaging spaces has been linked to increased psychological safety. Capstick and Ateek (2021) suggest that such spaces as protective factors for esteem and identity enable refugee learners to engage with their linguistic heritage and participate meaningfully. Capstick (2019) further emphasizes that translanguaging spaces are important not only for language learning, but also for psychosocial well-being, resilience, and even trauma healing.

Beyond classrooms, translanguaging in community-based workshops can disrupt the dominance of mainstream languages. For instance, Helm and Dabré (2018) show that dialogic "contact zones" that welcome multiple languages can reposition refugees and migrants as competent speakers rather than "non-speakers," promoting conditions of equitable participation. Together, these investigations point to the need for educational policies and practices that move beyond monolingualism and actively develop translanguaging spaces in which the well-being and inclusion of displaced learners can be sustained.

Home Language, Family Literacy, and Educational Outcomes

A growing body of research highlights the value of students' home languages and cultural knowledge in supporting their academic development and identity. Studies have shown that families do not provide "deficient" linguistic input but rather offer funds of knowledge or rich resources that can boost school learning (Moll et al., 1992). For example, Machado-Casas (2012) explores Indigenous Latinx immigrant children and family members fluidly shifted between languages and communication modes as everyday practices in homes and communities. These activities supported bilingual development by aiding comprehension in one language while building vocabulary in the other. Families were not simply using all languages available in informal learning sites like homes or museums. They were co-constructing understanding using flexible repertoires of speech, gesture, and print. Choi (2022) finds that a sojourning Korean multilingual child and his mother translanguaged to jointly solve problems and explain concepts. Such findings reinforce that children learn best when invited to access their existing knowledge and discuss new ideas in the language(s) they know best. When students use their home language as part of learning, they can achieve deeper understanding

of content and form cognitive connections that might not emerge if everything is kept in English.

Research has also found that including families and their cultural practices in instruction can boost migrant students' academic motivation and sense of identity. When teachers recognize cultural practices like storytelling, oral history, or community traditions as part of classroom literacy activities, students often show greater engagement and confidence. de Araujo et al. (2018) show that when teachers allow and encourage the use of students' first languages and incorporate their cultural backgrounds in mathematics classrooms, students are better able to make sense of academic content and develop positive self-concepts. The study underscores that leveraging these linguistic and cultural resources is vital for connecting school learning with students' lived experiences and supporting their holistic development, particularly for those from immigrant and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Translanguaging in Teacher Education

We position translanguaging pedagogy within the larger lens of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), which argues that educators must not only value but actively maintain students' cultural and linguistic practices in school. For children from linguistically diverse homes, this means their home languages should be nurtured and sustained, not treated merely as temporary scaffolds on the way to English. We use the term linguistic justice to describe the moral obligation to respect all languages and provide opportunities to learn through them. This perspective is consistent with a raciolinguistic framework (Flores & Rosa, 2015), which warns that even well-intentioned "additive bilingual" models can inadvertently reinforce racialized hierarchies. From a raciolinguistic viewpoint, simply allowing occasional home language use is not enough if underlying biases about language superiority remain unchallenged. Therefore, our theoretical lens merges translanguaging with a critical stance that teachers must actively work to decolonize language practices in the classroom, interrogating and undoing the notion that academic knowledge can only be constructed through "standard" English. We aimed to cultivate in PSTs what Baker-Bell (2020) calls a stance of linguistic justice. She argues that teachers should be aware of their role in reversing linguistic oppression and creating educational spaces where multilingualism is the norm and a source of pride.

In practice, this framework influenced the design of the PSTs' learning experiences in our study. We deliberately structured the FLOA project around the idea that PSTs need to see translanguaging in action in real contexts in order to grasp its instructional significance. Through observing families in an informal environment, PSTs

ventured into a translanguaging space beyond the school walls, witnessing how meaning-making occurs fluidly across languages and modes. We anchored reflective discussions in the concept of funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), operating on the understanding that families hold rich knowledge and cultural resources that should inform teaching.

The literature points to several key levers for new teachers to cultivate a translanguaging stance (García et al., 2017): (a) engaging in critical reflection to disrupt monolingual biases and deficit perspectives about linguistic diversity; (b) gaining direct exposure to the assets of students' home languages and cultures through community engagement; and (c) having opportunities to plan and implement translanguaging strategies, ideally with guidance or mentorship. Our research extends this work by involving PSTs in an informal family research project that brings together all three aspects. This approach aligns with recent calls in the field. García et al. (2021) have urged teacher education to center community and family ways of knowing as part of a translanguaging "manifesto" for equity, and Seltzer (2022) argues that preservice teachers need explicit support to adopt a translanguaging stance in their teaching practice.

Thus, the theoretical orientation underlying our study intertwines translanguaging, critical sociocultural views of language (addressing power and identity), and asset-based pedagogy (recognizing community knowledge). This integrative lens guided our approach to analyzing PSTs' learning. We specifically looked for evidence that PSTs were developing a translanguaging pedagogical stance, that they were becoming critically aware of linguistic power dynamics, and that they were recognizing students' home language practices as valuable assets for learning. Our theoretical and methodological orientation reflects our goal of not only observing PST change but also actively engineering experiences that facilitate such change through a design-based research approach in teacher education.

Methodology

Research Design and Context

This study employed a design-based research approach within a practice-oriented teacher education setting. The research took place in an Elementary Literacy Methods course and its co-requisite Practicum course at a public university in the southeastern United States. As teacher educators, we (the authors) redesigned the course curricula to help PSTs develop competence in implementing translanguaging pedagogy through direct research involvement in multilingual families' literacy experiences. The course was (re)designed by the first author (also the instructor) to integrate a multilingual

Family Learning Observation and Analysis (FLOA) project as a core component. This project served both as a rich learning experience for PSTs and as a data source for our study on their development.

All nine PSTs in the Fall 2024 cohort (all in their junior year of a B.Ed. program) participated in the FLOA project as part of required coursework. For the purposes of research, we obtained informed consent from four of the PSTs to analyze their coursework artifacts and to conduct individual interviews. These four focal PSTs (all females; pseudonyms Lily, Ava, Ellie, and Sophia) who self-identified as monolingual White American. The full cohort was seven White and two Black PSTs, and all self-identified as monolingual English speakers. Pseudonyms are used for all preservice teacher participants when reporting findings.

To ensure conceptual anchoring to our research focus and to examine the FLOA model when fully operationalized, we purposefully narrowed our data collection and analysis to the Fall 2024 cohort. By Fall 2024, the FLOA project included enriched supports (compared to a prior pilot run) such as a more structured “moment analysis” protocol, stronger discussion prompts, and extended peer-to-peer debriefings. These features provided a coherent dataset that allowed us to trace PST learning across phases, from initial family observation to lesson design, in an integrated, practice-based manner. The PST cohort reflected the broader demographics of the teacher education program at this university (a predominantly English-monolingual program). Few participants had extensive prior experience with immigrant or refugee communities, and most had limited coursework related to teaching English learners. This context set the stage for the transformative learning we hoped to foster.

FLOA Project Implementation

The FLOA project was implemented twice during the 16-week semester (once in October, once in November) and consisted of three main phases each time: Observation, Analysis, and Report. In the Observation phase, teams of three PSTs observed an immigrant or refugee family during an informal learning experience at the children’s museum (a community partner). The families were recruited through “Family Day” museum tour events co-organized by the museum and the instructors. Each participating family was asked to spend time at a designated exhibit while PSTs observed. Three families (one per PST team) participated, each with at least one young child (ages approximately 4–8). For example, one family spoke primarily Mandarin Chinese at home, and another spoke primarily Spanish. All family participants gave informed consent to be observed and video-recorded during their museum visit. The PSTs did not direct the families’ activities but simply accompanied

(at a respectful distance) and recorded the families’ naturally occurring interactions in the museum setting.

During observations, PSTs were required to videotape segments of the family’s interaction (with permission) and to take detailed ethnographic fieldnotes (Frank, 1999) on the family’s language and literacy practices. They noted, for example, when parents or children used the home language or English or both, how family members labeled objects or narrated activities, how they supported the child’s understanding (e.g., through explanations or questions), and any cultural practices or references embedded in the activity. PSTs were instructed to pay particular attention to translanguaging moments, broadly defined as instances of fluid language mixing or switching and the use of multiple semiotic modes (gestures, images, etc.) to facilitate learning or interaction. To prepare PSTs for these observations, the first author provided a workshop beforehand on researching multilingual families in informal environments and on using recording devices ethically and effectively. We also discussed possible behaviors to look for (e.g., a parent translating exhibit text aloud for a child, a child using a home language to explain something to a sibling, or family members using gestures and bilingual labels while problem-solving). PSTs were encouraged to keep “open jottings” of anything surprising or insightful they noticed.

In the Analysis phase, each PST independently selected one significant 4–5 minute video-recorded literacy event from their observation and examined it closely. Drawing on course concepts, PSTs analyzed the moment in terms of the family’s language practices, resource use (signage, gestures, artifacts, etc.), and the roles family members played as knowers or learners. They looked for patterns of communication such as code-switching between languages, use of tactile or gestural strategies, and collaborative explanations or problem-solving, and they considered how these practices shaped the child’s meaning-making and literacy development. PSTs supported their analyses with evidence from their fieldnotes, video clips, and transcriptions of dialogue. This “micro-analysis” exercise functioned as a mediating step between observation and broader reflection, helping PSTs make sense of how certain interactions unfolded and why they were educationally significant. It pushed them to articulate what they saw happening (e.g., “the father repeated the instructions in Arabic, then gestured to demonstrate”) and why it mattered (e.g., “this helped the child overcome confusion and engage with the activity, showing literacy was being co-constructed multimodally”). This analytic phase thus guided PSTs to recognize that ordinary family interactions are rich sites of complex literacy practices.

The Report phase required PSTs to synthesize their observations and analyses in a written reflection (approximately 2 pages, single-spaced) addressing guiding questions such as: What did you learn about the family's language use and cultural practices? How did family interaction support learning? What implications does this have for literacy teaching? PSTs were prompted to connect their reports to course readings on translanguaging, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and funds of knowledge. In between the two iterations of FLOA, a debriefing seminar (led by the first author) provided students an opportunity to share and discuss their key findings with peers. The class engaged in a collaborative "data session," collectively watching and analyzing selected video segments from different teams to deepen their insights and to surface cross-cutting themes across the family experiences. All PSTs completed this sequence of Observation → Analysis → Report twice (with either the same family or a different one, due to some overlap in volunteers).

Finally, after completing the FLOA project, PSTs were tasked with developing an original translanguaging-infused lesson plan for their practicum classrooms (Grades 1–5). They were explicitly instructed to draw on what they learned from the family research when designing this lesson. The assignment prompt asked them to design a literacy lesson (e.g., a reading or writing activity) that intentionally incorporated students' home languages and/or cultural knowledge. They had to justify their design by referencing specific examples from their family observations. For instance, if a PST noticed a parent using both Spanish and English to scaffold a science concept at the museum, the PST might plan a science-themed read-aloud in class with key vocabulary taught in both Spanish and English. The lesson plans needed to include standard components (objectives, materials, procedures, assessment) as well as a rationale explicitly highlighting the translanguaging strategies or culturally relevant methods used (such as bilingual partner reading, multilingual vocabulary charts, inviting family members as guest readers, etc.).

Due to the rigid and prescriptive nature of the curriculum provided during their practicum placements, most PSTs were unable to implement their designed lesson plans in the actual field classrooms. Instead, they presented their lesson plans to our methods class, explaining how they would adapt and apply asset-based pedagogies in practice for their future classrooms if given the opportunity. These peer presentations became a space for collective reflection and discussion, allowing PSTs to consider ways to navigate constraints while still honoring students' linguistic and cultural resources. Notably, the lesson plan assignment was iterative. Each PST first shared a draft lesson idea informally with peers (and received oral feedback from the instructor and classmates), then refined and submitted a final

written lesson plan and rationale. The rubric for the lesson plan had been modified to explicitly require that PSTs demonstrate how their plan supports equity, inclusiveness, and asset-based approaches. In this way, the assignment simulated a design cycle (draft → feedback → revision), encouraging PSTs to integrate the asset-based elements thoughtfully rather than treating them as an afterthought.

The overall multi-phase design of our intervention (from community observation to lesson planning) was deliberately crafted to connect research and practice for PSTs. It allowed us as researchers to examine PSTs' growth across different forms of evidence. Fieldnotes, analyses, and reports revealed changes in their understanding, while lesson plans and class discussions revealed changes in their envisioned teaching practice. By focusing on a single semester where the FLOA model was fully realized, we had a coherent snapshot to analyze how PSTs' knowledge, beliefs, and instructional planning evolved.

Data Sources and Collection

We gathered multiple qualitative data sources from the PSTs' work, aligned to the phases of the project:

- **Observational Fieldnotes:** Each PST submitted detailed fieldnotes (2–4 single-spaced pages) documenting what they observed during the family museum visit, along with personal reflections on those observations. These field notes provided a firsthand account of what each PST found salient in the family's translanguaging and literacy practices. They captured initial impressions and wonderings (e.g., noticing a parent translating for a child, or a parent using a cultural reference to explain something). These notes served as an entry point into PSTs' awareness and were later coded for evidence of what caught PSTs' attention (e.g., instances of translanguaging, family interaction patterns).
- **Moment Analysis:** After selecting a key moment from their video, each PST produced a written analysis (~1 page) of that literacy event, using concepts from the course (translanguaging, funds of knowledge, etc.) to interpret it. These analysis documents acted as a bridge between raw observation and broader reflection. They were rich, interpretive narratives that combined description and analysis, often including direct transcriptions or detailed descriptions of interactions. They allowed us to see in PSTs' own words how they were making sense of specific interactions (e.g., a PST noting how a father's use of both languages and a physical demonstration helped the child solve a puzzle). The moment analyses were particularly valuable for answering RQ1, as they showed PSTs beginning to articulate the pedagogical value of what they observed (e.g., recognizing "gesture and home language together scaffolded understanding here").

- **Reflection Reports:** Each PST wrote a synthesis report (about 1–2 single-spaced pages) after each observation cycle, answering the guiding questions about what they learned and implications for teaching. These reflective essays were narrative and often deeply personal. PSTs frequently connected what they saw to their prior assumptions and future aspirations. The reports essentially provided a window into PSTs' evolving conceptual knowledge regarding RQ1 (translanguaging stance and understanding of home language practices) in a more holistic form. For analysis, we treated the reflection reports as key data for PSTs' overall shifts in beliefs and perspectives, since they typically summarized each PST's takeaways from the entire experience in narrative form (often including statements like "I used to think..., now I realize..."). In terms of our research questions, these reports directly informed how we answered RQ1, since they explicitly addressed what PSTs learned about translanguaging pedagogy and home language/culture.
- **Lesson Plans and Rationales:** Finally, each PST's lesson plan and accompanying rationale paragraph constituted a critical data source for RQ2. The lesson plans (2–3 double-spaced pages plus a rationale) provided concrete evidence of how PSTs attempted to apply translanguaging strategies in designing instruction. Because PSTs were largely unable to carry out these lessons in their actual field placements (due to mandated curricula), these plans represent their intended practice as a sort of proxy for implementation. We asked PSTs to be explicit in their rationales about how family observations influenced their lesson design. For example, a PST might write, "Seeing the family mix Spanish and English during play made me realize I can allow students to use Spanglish during class discussions. So, in my lesson plan I included a bilingual 'turn-and-talk' segment." The lesson plan documents, therefore, show both the imaginative leaps PSTs made (projecting what they would do in a more flexible environment) and the constraints they anticipated (many PSTs noted in their rationales that they chose modifications that could fit within a typical class). During analysis, we viewed the lesson plans as the primary data for RQ2 as evidence of how PSTs translated their new understandings into pedagogical designs. Even though these were hypothetical implementations, their content (and the reflective statements within them) revealed a great deal about PSTs' developing pedagogical agency and any remaining tensions.

In addition to these coursework artifacts, we also collected post-course interview data for validation and follow-up. Specifically, a few months after the semester (when the PSTs had entered a 6-credit, part-time school placement "residency I" in spring), we conducted brief written interviews (via email) with three of the four focal PSTs. We asked them to reflect on whether and how they had been able to use anything from the FLOA project in their student-teaching so far. This served as a form of member-checking and

longitudinal insight, allowing us to see if their espoused changes persisted and to verify our interpretations of their growth. These follow-up responses are incorporated in our discussion (they were not part of the initial coding dataset for findings but rather used to triangulate and enrich our understanding of sustained impact). All data collection procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board, and we adhered to ethical guidelines (informed consent, the right to withdraw, confidentiality of records, etc.) throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Our analysis examined how PSTs made sense of and utilized insights from the FLOA project, with the theoretical framing of translanguaging and asset-based pedagogy guiding our lens. We used a qualitative thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify changes and patterns in PSTs' understanding, beliefs, and instructional planning.

The dataset for analysis consisted of the various artifacts described: observation field notes, moment analysis write-ups, reflection reports, and lesson plan rationales (from all four focal PSTs, across the two FLOA cycles). A central aspect of our FLOA project was that PSTs had to select and investigate a particular literacy moment in detail. These 4–5 minute video clips and their analysis became key evidence of what PSTs noticed and valued in family interactions. Using guiding prompts, PSTs considered each moment in terms of linguistic, cultural, and embodied resources and what learning dynamics were occurring. These prompts aligned with our theoretical focus, ensuring that PSTs (and we as analysts) paid attention to translanguaging in practice, social interaction patterns, and asset-based elements.

We engaged in a two-phase coding process, combining deductive and inductive coding. First, we developed a preliminary codebook deductively based on our research questions and conceptual framework. Broad code categories included: (1) Translanguaging awareness (e.g., PST notes or reflections indicating recognition of bilingual practices or shifting language use), (2) Literacy as social/embodied practice (e.g., PST noticing or valuing collaborative, multimodal aspects of literacy events), (3) Asset-based recognition (e.g., PST explicitly reframing a family behavior as a strength or resource, or acknowledging family knowledge), and (4) Pedagogical application (e.g., PST discussing how they would or did incorporate these insights into teaching plans, or noting constraints). Under these broad categories, we then derived more specific sub-codes inductively from the data, essentially as themes emerged from PSTs' own language and ideas.

Two researchers (the authors) coded the data. To enhance reliability and reduce instructor bias, the

second author (who was not the course instructor) independently coded a subset of data first. This subset included samples of each type of artifact from at least two participants. We then compared coding and discussed any discrepancies to refine the code definitions. After reaching consensus on the codebook, we coded the entire dataset. We performed regular cross-checks and memo-writing to ensure consistency and to capture emerging patterns. During this process, we wrote analytic memos addressing each research question, which enabled us to trace each PST's learning trajectory through the FLOA phases (Observation → Analysis → Reflection → (imagined) Application).

Throughout analysis, we remained cognizant of our positionality as both researchers and (in one case) the course instructor. To limit potential bias in interpretation, the initial coding phase (and much of the memo drafting) was conducted by the second author, who did not have a direct role in teaching the PSTs. The first author then reviewed and contributed, allowing us to incorporate insider knowledge of the course while still challenging interpretations. We engaged in reflexive dialogue about how our identities (e.g., both authors are Asian immigrants and bilingual education researchers) might shape what we see as significant, and we made a conscious effort to let participants' own words drive the theme development.

We organized our final thematic findings around the two refined research questions. As described above, we extracted representative excerpts from PSTs' written work to illustrate their emerging understandings (RQ1) and envisioned pedagogical applications (RQ2).

Findings

Overall, engaging in the informal family research project led PSTs to undergo two major shifts. First, they significantly reframed their understanding of translanguaging pedagogy, moving from viewing home language use as peripheral to recognizing it as a purposeful, holistic pedagogical approach, and they came to appreciate students' home language and cultural practices as vital assets for learning (addressing RQ1). Second, they attempted to carry these insights into practice by designing instruction that integrated students' linguistic and cultural resources, though they encountered systemic constraints that limited direct implementation (addressing RQ2). We include illustrative quotes from PSTs (pseudonyms Lily, Ava, Ellie, Sophia) to amplify their voices in the narrative.

Shaping a Translanguaging Stance and Valuing Home Language & Cultural Practices

Developing a translanguaging stance: Prior to the FLOA project, PSTs had a somewhat limited or abstract notion of translanguaging, often seeing it as something

remedial (to be used only until English "takes over") or equating it with simple code-switching. Through the FLOA, PSTs' conceptualization of translanguaging became far deeper and more practice-oriented. PSTs expressed that actually seeing a multilingual family using two languages fluidly during everyday interactions fundamentally changed their perspective on what bilingual learning looks like. As Lily wrote after her observation,

"He [the child, 'James'] commonly switches between speaking English and Chinese, and changes the language based on who he is talking to. When talking to himself, he tends to speak in English, but when talking to his dad, he usually speaks in Chinese. For him, literacy is a combination of both languages." (FLOA Reflection).

By witnessing this natural interweaving of languages in context, PSTs began to view translanguaging not as a hindrance or crutch, but as a normal mode of communication that could be leveraged in teaching. Lily's surprise that James used both languages so flexibly and her conclusion that his literacy spans languages signaled a pivotal realization that bilingual children do not compartmentalize languages the way schools often force them to.

All PSTs wrote about having one or more "aha" moments during the observations where they noticed translanguaging supporting learning or communication in a breakthrough way. For example, Ava reflected on her selected video moment, saying: "the moment I chose has informed my understanding of how dynamic and multifaceted literacy really is. Many people think that literacy solely involves reading and writing, but it is so much more. It includes speaking and listening, as well." (FLOA Analysis). Ava's realization indicates a shift from a narrow, print-centric concept of literacy to one that encompasses oral language and auditory understanding.

Other participants echoed these realizations, increasingly articulating translanguaging pedagogy as purposeful dual-language support rather than a fallback for English deficiencies. Instead of seeing instances of home language use as students "falling back" or "lacking English," PSTs began to reframe such instances as teachers intentionally using the home language to facilitate academic growth in both the home language and English. As Ava explained in her lesson plan rationale, "Students' knowledge of another language should be seen as an ability and called upon as a way to support students as they develop and express their understanding in a new language." This reframing illustrates how PSTs began to view home language use not as a hindrance, but as a means to enhance content learning and reinforce understanding.

The FLOA project not only helped PSTs understand the theory behind translanguaging, but also expanded their awareness of concrete instructional strategies available to them. By watching multilingual family interactions, PSTs saw children making meaning across different modes (verbal, gestural, and tactile) and many started enumerating practical ideas they wanted to try. For example, Ava noted:

"Before observing bilingual/multilingual families, I did not realize how many forms of communication these families utilize. I am now able to see that gesturing and tactile communication serve as main ways of getting thoughts and messages across, especially for those that are learning a new language, like the child I observed." (FLOA Report).

This insight moved her (and others) from a vague consciousness of "multiple modalities" to specific pedagogical content: PSTs identified strategies like using gestures or physical demonstration alongside speech, creating vocabulary journals with side-by-side entries in English and the home language, or doing read-alouds in English while encouraging follow-up discussions in students' preferred languages. Ava, for instance, suggested in her lesson plan that students be provided with bilingual dictionaries, vocabulary lists, and opportunities to write in their home language. She formed this idea after observing a parent at the museum label objects in both languages for their child. This example shows how directly the PSTs were drawing teaching ideas from what they saw families do.

A second significant transformation was PSTs' understanding of translanguaging as a natural and holistic communicative approach, rather than an unusual or piecemeal tactic. Through documenting how multilingual families learn in informal contexts, PSTs found that children do not rigidly separate language use like they might be required to in school. Instead, the children and parents drew on a complete array of semiotic resources (e.g., spoken words, gestures, printed text, even body movement) to interact and make meaning. Ava illustrated this holistic view with an example from her video analysis:

"Because the child was so young, communicating with just words did not suffice in this instance. The dad needed to physically show his son how to solve the problem he was facing. It not only worked in that moment, but it also aided him later on." (FLOA Analysis).

In this scenario, a father used a combination of demonstration (non-verbal) and bilingual labels to help his child connect two Velcro blocks. The PST initially might have interpreted the child as "silent" or "not understanding," but later recognized the child as learning through observation and imitation. Instead of viewing the child's silence as a sign of confusion or lack of understanding, Ava came to understand that the child was actively learning by watching and

doing, expanding her definition of what counts as communication and literacy learning.

Not every PST, of course, demonstrated a fully formed understanding of translanguaging pedagogy across the assignments; some still grappled with deeply ingrained notions about language use in literacy instruction. Two PSTs in our sample continued to describe translanguaging primarily as a scaffold, implying they saw it as a temporary support to "flesh out" or supplement English instruction. Even these individuals, however, acknowledged that the FLOA project had pushed their thinking significantly. For instance, Sophia admitted in her report that she still thought she needed to build more confidence in how to assess learning in two languages, but she wrote: "(All) students should be encouraged to make use of their home languages when at school. They must know that their unique backgrounds hold value, and that one culture is not better than another." (Lesson Plan). This statement exemplifies the movement toward an asset-based lens, even if some PSTs were cautious in how to implement it. It suggests a willingness for continual development and a shift in ideology. By the end of the project, all four focal PSTs explicitly expressed a commitment to honoring students' linguistic backgrounds in their future teaching. They saw translanguaging as a multifaceted pedagogy: natural for communication, supportive for understanding, and essential to honoring students' identities.

Recognizing home language and cultural practices as learning assets: Beyond shifting their abstract understanding of translanguaging, PSTs' reflections revealed a parallel transformation in how they viewed students' home languages and cultural practices in the context of learning. Initially, some PSTs had implicitly regarded families' language use and cultural habits as something separate from (or even inhibiting to) "real" academic learning. After engaging with the families, however, they began to see home linguistic and cultural practices as foundational resources for children's development. The FLOA project gave PSTs a deep appreciation of how home language and culture influence children's informal learning and, importantly, how these can be leveraged in formal education. Their reflections converged on the idea that a student's home language is not a barrier to learning at all, but rather essential to their cognitive and emotional development.

PSTs observed numerous instances of parents and caregivers using the home language, along with gestures and modeling, to enhance children's understanding. For example, Lily reflected, "Watching Jenni and her father navigate both Chinese and English shows literacy as flexible. The father's actions—reading signs, examining the fruit, and then

translating based on context—demonstrate literacy as a process of interpretation and understanding.” (FLOA Reflection). Her observation highlights the child’s adaptable language skills and social awareness, showing that multilingualism should be seen as an asset, not a challenge.

Ellie, another PST, noted that literacy is collaborative and relational after watching the family interact. She highlighted how literacy “emerged through shared experiences” and was continually shaped by collaborative interactions among family members. Ellie wrote: “It was something made and resourced in common between James and his family, and was adapted to suit their modes of play and context. It tells me that literacy is cognitive, but it is social and emotional.” (FLOA Report). Her insight widened the understood parameters of literacy to include embodied, relational, and plurilingual sense-making. This was a significant broadening of perspective – from thinking of literacy as an individual skill (reading/writing in English) to seeing it as a family-mediated, culturally embedded practice that involves feelings and relationships.

Many PSTs reflected on how the family research project directly challenged their previously held beliefs about multilingual families. For example, before the project some equated “good parent support” with things like assisting children with English homework or showing up to school events. After observing families in the informal learning space, they realized that such a narrow definition was missing a lot. The project revealed to them how much effort and intentionality parents invest in their children’s learning outside of school, and how resourceful these families are, even when English is not their first language. As Ellie explained,

“This family is constantly practicing literacy, even if it does not look like school literacy. The mother explained things to her child in Chinese, and he repeated back to her in English. They were telling stories and making sense of things together, which is literacy, just not how school defines it.” (FLOA Reflection).

This reflection shows a breakdown of that deficit assumption and a newfound respect for families’ contributions.

A particularly enlightening moment for Ellie was when she saw just how complex a child’s bilingualism can be. She described an observed interaction that helped her see this complexity: “This interaction reflects James’ bilingualism and the way he may use Chinese for direct conversation but may use English for self-expression. Both languages have a distinct time of when they are used for James.” (FLOA Analysis). By noting how James switched languages depending on context and audience (Chinese with his dad, English when talking to himself), Ellie recognized the fluidity

and subtlety of bilingual literacy practices. She saw that multilingual children navigate their languages in sophisticated ways, and that this is a strength. This is evidence of a high level of communicative competence and adaptability.

Other PSTs realized that their initial understanding of “literacy” had been too narrow and too centered on school-based, English-only notions. As Ava pointed out in her reflection, literacy involves speaking and listening too – and we would add, in any language. Observing families communicate across languages and through various channels (oral storytelling, conversation, oral explanations) made it clear that literacy in multilingual homes typically encompasses much more than just reading and writing print text. In another reflection, Ellie elaborated on how the project challenged her understanding of what literacy could be in the lives of multilingual families:

“Through my FLOA analysis, field notes, and in-class data session I gained a new experience in what literacy means in terms of multilingual families. I observed how literacy can be in terms of communication, body language, and even emotional expression.” (FLOA Report).

As a whole, these reflections framed a significant pedagogical shift. Instead of thinking of home language and cultural practices as something other than school learning, PSTs began to see them as the very foundation of school learning. The experience encouraged them to develop an asset-based perspective on bilingualism, viewing parent involvement as extending beyond support for English-language learning. This means recognizing families’ languages and cultures as essential to student learning.

Through their observations, PSTs started questioning their assumptions about the way multilingual and culturally diverse families learn. Many also wrote that learning did not always take the predictable question-and-answer form that often characterizes classrooms. Instead, children often learned by observing, imitating, and participating in shared activities with adults and siblings. For example, Ava described a situation in which a child had trouble connecting two Velcro blocks. Instead of verbally providing instructions, the child’s father covered the child’s hand with his own to assist him. Instead of interpreting the child’s silence as confusion or a lack of understanding, Ava recognized that the child was learning by closely observing, imitating, and sensing what was happening. This experience broadened her understanding of literacy and learning.

Overall, PSTs learned in a holistic way that home languages and cultural practices are helpful and represent important resources in the learning of multilingual children. They found evidence that

using the language spoken at home can enhance understanding; that embedding cultural references can contextualize and even “decolonize” learning; and that families make an enormous impact on children’s education. These insights address RQ1, showing how PSTs came to value and seek ways to leverage home language and culture in their future classrooms. They now see students’ linguistic backgrounds as layers of knowledge to build upon rather than hurdles to overcome. All four focal PSTs ended the course voicing intentions to continue involving families and using students’ home languages in some form during student teaching or beyond. This is a clear testament to the shift in their stance from the beginning of the semester.

Translating Insights into Practice: Designing Multilingual and Culturally Relevant Lessons

Despite their conceptual growth and eagerness to embrace translanguaging, PSTs found it challenging to apply what they learned in their actual field placements, which were governed by strict curricula and policies. Many PSTs were confronted with rigid English-only curricula, strict pacing guides, or mentor teachers who expected adherence to scripted lessons. As one PST wrote in a course discussion, “We were told to use the scripted materials as they are. There wasn’t room to experiment.” These structures left little room for the kinds of innovative, responsive design that PSTs were imagining. Recognizing this, the mentor text lesson plan assignment was intentionally framed as an “alternative space,” a chance for PSTs to reflect on their FLOA experiences and envision how they would enact culturally sustaining literacy instruction if the usual confines were lifted. Instead of treating lesson planning as a technical exercise, the assignment became a venue for articulating emerging ideological shifts and exploring more responsive classroom possibilities on paper.

Although PSTs did not implement their FLOA-inspired lessons in the actual field at the time (for the reasons noted), they did integrate their understanding of translanguaging and sociocultural aspects of literacy into these lesson designs. The lesson plans blended course themes with creative strategies. For example, Ava, who had seen how tactile communication between a father and child supported problem-solving at the museum, focused her lesson plan on multimodality and student choice. She designed a writing unit in which students could compose biographical narratives either by writing, recording audio, or drawing, and she explicitly allowed bilingual options. In her rationale, she wrote: “Bilingual/multilingual students will be allowed to write in their home language if it is deemed necessary. If unable to write, students will be given the option to either record or draw their biographical narratives.” (Lesson Plan). This lesson plan signals a shift in her thinking

from earlier in the semester. She went from a view of literacy as print-bound to a view of literacy as embodied and multimodal, a sensibility directly molded by her FLOA realizations. As she noted in discussion, she might not have thought to allow drawing as a form of “writing” if she hadn’t seen how the child at the museum communicated through action and gesture. Ava’s approach in the lesson pushes back against monolingual norms typically taken for granted in elementary literacy instruction. She deliberately created space for home language use and alternative expression modes in a writing assignment, which counters the usual “English essay only” expectation.

Ellie, for her lesson, chose a culturally relevant literature approach. She selected *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (a picture book about a Korean girl’s name and identity) as a mentor text and invited students to reflect on the cultural significance of their own names and family naming traditions. In her rationale, Ellie emphasized the importance of storytelling and community building in literacy learning, noting: “Sharing their stories helps students connect with peers and celebrate the diverse communities they belong to.” (Lesson Plan). Her instructional objectives even asked students to “structure narrative writing that draws on the cultural meanings of their names.” This pedagogical stance echoed the ideological shift visible in her FLOA reflection (where she observed that literacy is social and emotional). She concluded the rationale by directly linking it to what she saw with the family: “This shows me that literacy is cognitive, but also social and emotional,” she wrote, effectively paraphrasing her earlier insight and embedding it as a design principle. In other words, her lesson aimed to reproduce the kind of familial, culture-rich storytelling context she saw James experiencing with his family, but in a classroom setting.

To make this lesson concrete, Ellie incorporated what she understood about multilingual meaning-making from her observation. She had noted in her FLOA assignments how a young child learned fruit names in English through an interaction of language and touch (pointing, handling fruit). Inspired by this, her lesson had students engage with artifacts related to their names (like bringing an object or heirloom that represents their name story), thus engaging sensory and personal connections. In her reflection she wrote: “An object being seen as an entity of more than one language or culture helps show that literacy is dynamic and multifaceted.” (FLOA Report). Her lesson plan disrupted narrow understandings of text and language by charting a relational, material, and cultural framework for literacy development. The students would write about their names by interacting with real objects and telling oral stories, bridging written and oral, personal and academic.

Collectively, the lesson plans demonstrated that PSTs were beginning to imagine possibilities that extended beyond the expectations of their practicum placements. They were, in essence, creating what García and Kleyn (2016) might call “counter-hegemonic translanguaging spaces” within their lesson designs, creating spaces in which students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoires would be not only allowed but celebrated. Our PSTs had to keep their FLOA-inspired work separate from their actual teaching experiences, indicating that the raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015) we discussed theoretically are actively maintained and reproduced by institutional and curricular structures. These structures embed normative English as the default mode of “acceptable” instruction and frame all other forms of communication as supplementary or deficient. PSTs could clearly see this once they had one foot in each world: the university world encouraging translanguaging innovation, and the school world often insisting on monolingual conformity.

As such, the mentor text lesson plans became more than just pedagogical exercises on paper. They turned into ideological artifacts, capturing insights into PSTs’ changing identities as teachers and their commitments to linguistic justice. They also laid bare the tensions PSTs must navigate between what they are learning to value (multilingual, family-connected practices) and what they are currently allowed to do in rigid school environments. These tensions highlight a need for PSTs (and teacher educators) to be prepared to not only know how to write asset-based lessons, but also to understand, name, and ultimately work to subvert the structures in the field that narrow their pedagogical agency.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the transformative potential of integrating informal family learning research into teacher education to develop PSTs’ translanguaging pedagogy and critical multilingual awareness. Grounded in asset-based approaches, including translanguaging (García, 2009) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), our study shows that engaging PSTs with multilingual families and communities can cultivate epistemological shifts, pedagogical innovation, and a critical awareness of raciolinguistic ideologies in teaching.

Translanguaging pedagogy as a lived practice: Our findings demonstrate that PSTs shifted their perception of translanguaging from a theoretical concept to a pedagogical stance they personally value. This aligns with Galante and Dela Cruz’s (2024) account of critical plurilingualism, which emphasizes that effective teacher preparation must go beyond abstract lectures to include real opportunities for meaning-making in multiple languages. In our study, PSTs were

not just learning about translanguaging; they were learning translanguaging by witnessing multilingual families engaging in fluid, multimodal communication in authentic contexts. These lived encounters sparked PSTs’ imaginations of what language use might look like in their future classrooms. As Ojha et al. (2024) highlight, linking language to identity and power in teacher education makes it possible for PSTs to critically understand how embracing confrontational multilingual practices can challenge dominant linguistic hierarchies and promote student voice. We saw this happen in our project: through observing families, PSTs began to confront their own biases (seeing that “English-only” is not inherently superior for learning) and to envision classroom language use that includes translanguaging as a norm.

Engaging in the FLOA project was crucial in developing what Mahalingappa (2024) describes as PSTs’ “linguistic critical consciousness.” By attending to the way families talk and interact across languages, PSTs began to challenge school-centric framings of literacy. They recognized storytelling, gesturing, and translanguaging as legitimate and powerful ways of constructing meaning, often undervalued in formal schooling. This awakening accords with Stillman and Palmer’s (2024) call for teacher preparation to work toward transformation by developing candidates’ capacity to view language as a social and political practice rather than simply as content to be managed. Our PSTs started to see language use in the classroom as something inherently tied to social relationships and power dynamics (e.g., who gets to use their home language, whose knowledge is validated).

From awareness to action: cultivating projective agency: In addition to raising critical awareness, our findings indicate that PSTs started to practice what Banegas et al. (2024) frame as projective agency, the capacity to imagine and formulate future pedagogical moves bound to social justice commitments. The creation of their “ideal” lesson plans allowed PSTs to rehearse this projective agency. They engaged in prospective thinking, asking: “If I could teach freely, how would I incorporate what I’ve learned about translanguaging and culture?” As PSTs planned lessons that brought in students’ home languages and stories, they exhibited a reframing of not just their ideology but their pedagogical imagination. However, the need to situate these lesson plans outside of their actual field placements highlights systemic barriers. As Cárdenas Curiel et al. (2024) argue, moments of linguistic community engagement and critical reflection (like FLOA) must be complemented by pedagogical freedom and institutional support if PSTs are to be fully enabled as change agents. Our PSTs had the critical insight and creativity but found themselves in placements that did not easily accommodate it. This suggests a need to reconsider, structurally, the model

of practicum in teacher education. If we truly want PSTs to plan for culturally sustaining lessons, we must also provide them opportunities to bring these lessons to life in real classrooms or at least support them in advocating for such opportunities.

This reflection echoes Burton et al.'s (2024) suggestion that PSTs would benefit from scaffolding to gauge the dissonance between the discourses and curricula they are taught to value and those they encounter in schools. Developing critical consciousness in teacher candidates is not sufficient on its own. Programs also need to prepare PSTs to advocate for pedagogical agency within monolingual school systems. In our case, that might mean equipping PSTs with strategies to introduce translanguaging practices in small ways despite curricular constraints, or to diplomatically work with mentor teachers and administrators to create room for experimentation (e.g., perhaps during small-group time or special projects). This calls for bridging the vision–practice gap present in our data.

Through the lens of teaching: how residency influences uptake: To gain further understanding of the long-term effects of the FLOA experience, we carried out follow-up written interviews with three PSTs a few months after our course, when they were in their part-time student teaching residency. These interviews provided rich details about how and whether PSTs were implementing FLOA-inspired dispositions and practices in their new teaching placements. The results were cautiously encouraging. Participants reported that they had begun applying what they learned about multilingual family engagement to notice and support students in nuanced ways. One PST shared that she reexamined a normally quiet English learner's silence in class and interpreted it through a FLOA lens as possibly the student observing or processing internally. She thus started pairing that student with a same-language buddy for discussions, giving an opportunity to voice understanding in the home language. Another PST recounted how she proactively offered multimodal options (drawing or speaking) for a writing task when she noticed an emergent bilingual student struggling with pencil-and-paper writing, reflecting the kind of flexibility she practiced in her lesson plan design.

These anecdotal cases indicate that FLOA influenced not only PSTs' lesson planning at the university but also their "in-the-moment" pedagogical judgments and relational work in their classrooms. While not generalizable, the cases offer hopeful evidence that community-based field experiences like FLOA can instill durable orientations toward culturally sustaining pedagogy, even in deeply standardized field placements. The PSTs found ways to bring their newfound asset-based lens into their actual teaching: noticing a student's behavior differently, adjusting an

activity to be more inclusive, or adding a culturally responsive touch to the routine. More systematic future longitudinal research is needed to investigate how such experiences influence early-career teachers' classroom enactments of translanguaging. These results suggest seeds were planted that continued to grow.

Reframing teacher education for refugee and immigrant learners: This study supports Stillman and Palmer's (2024) claim that reform in teacher education cannot be isolated tweaks but should be embedded in program-level coherence. Our course scaffolded PSTs through multiple iterations of observation, analysis, and reflection, followed by application. This sequence supported not only theoretical uptake but also practical translation (in planned form), indicating a measurable path for programs interested in incorporating translanguaging pedagogy at the heart of teacher preparation. In addition, our study bridges a gap in the literature by foregrounding pedagogical preparation for refugee and immigrant elementary students. As recent research notes (e.g., Mahalingappa, 2024; Ojha et al., 2024), preparing teachers to support students who have experienced displacement, language loss, or interrupted schooling requires approaches that are culturally and linguistically responsive and relevant. PSTs in our program began to see home language practices not as hindrances but as key resources for restoring students' voice, power, and agency in classroom learning. This shift is essential in counteracting the marginalization of refugee and immigrant children in rigid, monolingual educational systems.

Our emphasis on learning from families rather than about them proved especially important in this context. The community-based inquiry enabled PSTs to observe immigrant families' linguistic dexterity firsthand. These observations disrupted commonly held assumptions about family "involvement" and literacy, leading PSTs to reposition families as co-educators and cultural experts rather than as outsiders to the educational process. For children trying to make sense of displacement or navigate a new culture, such pedagogical stances in their teachers are essential. They validate children's lived experiences and help create classroom spaces where linguistic belonging is possible.

Limitations

We acknowledge several limitations of this study and suggest directions for future research. First, because PSTs were not able to implement their translanguaging lesson plans in classrooms during this study, our evidence of "application" is based on planned and self-reported intentions rather than observed teaching practice. This limits our ability to assess actual classroom effectiveness or student

outcomes. Second, the research was conducted with a single cohort of four focal PSTs in one teacher education program, which may limit generalizability to other contexts (e.g., different regions or secondary-level teacher candidates). Our findings should be transferred cautiously, with consideration of context. Third, as the first author was both instructor and researcher, there is an inherent risk of bias in interpreting PSTs' growth (e.g., seeing what we hoped to see). We mitigated this through independent coding by the second author and through reflexive analysis (discussing alternative explanations for any observed change), but some influence of the dual role may remain. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights. Future research could address these limitations by examining similar community-engaged teacher education interventions across multiple programs and by following participants into their early careers to observe actual classroom practice over time. Future work might also examine how novice teachers navigate constraints when implementing translanguaging pedagogies in different school contexts, and what supports might improve success.

Conclusion

Based on our findings, we recommend that teacher education programs consider the following actions to better prepare teachers for linguistically diverse classrooms:

Integrate community-based family learning experiences into teacher preparation: Providing PSTs with structured opportunities to learn with and from multilingual families (through home visits, community observations, etc.) can disrupt deficit views and cultivate asset-based mindsets early in training. These experiences help PSTs develop empathy and concrete strategies by seeing translanguaging and culturally embedded learning in action.

Explicitly foster critical multilingual awareness and translanguaging stance development: Coursework and reflections should prompt PSTs to interrogate their language beliefs and examine power dynamics in language education. Programs can incorporate assignments (like our FLOA project) and readings that urge PSTs to value students' home languages and cultural knowledge, and to plan instruction leveraging those assets. Seltzer (2022) suggests embedding translanguaging stance work throughout methods courses, and our results support this.

Collaborate with schools and policymakers (or prepare PSTs to advocate): It is necessary to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to create space within mandated curricula for translanguaging and culturally sustaining strategies, essentially, for helping new teachers navigate and challenge restrictive structures.

By taking these steps, teacher educators can move beyond merely raising PSTs' awareness and towards enabling them to enact and sustain linguistically inclusive pedagogies. This work suggests an emerging model of teacher education grounded in community, which frames multilingualism as a right and a resource and pedagogical design as an act of justice. Our findings underscore that through carefully designed community-based clinical experiences, we can better prepare PSTs not just to manage linguistic differences, but to actively build classrooms in which refugee and immigrant students thrive as multilingual, multicultural learners.

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