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# Culturally Responsive Strategies to Support Multilingual Learners

Liz Shanks and Mackenzie Weakland

## Abstract

Teachers must develop pedagogical practices to meet the needs of the growing number of multilingual learners in K-12 classrooms. Our inquiry-based research study analyzed ways that teachers can implement pedagogical strategies that are culturally responsive to multilingual learners. Thematic analysis of recent academic studies, class observations, and an interview with a language specialist affirm a set of culturally responsive instructional practices in the classroom that lead to the academic success of multilingual learners. These practices included teacher attitudes, translanguaging, and thinking routines to assist in English language acquisition. K-12 teachers, administrators, and community leaders working with multilingual learners can build on these findings.

*Keywords:* culturally responsive teaching strategies, translanguaging, scaffolding, multimodal learning, teacher care, thinking routines, intentional language choice, multilingual learners

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that affect the academic success of multilingual learners as well as ways that teachers can implement strategies or pedagogy to ensure this success. Multilingual learners are “students who are developing proficiency in multiple languages. This includes students learning English as an additional language in school” (National Science Teaching Association, 2023). We wanted to identify ways multilingual learners struggle in the K-12 classroom, ways teachers can alleviate anxiety in these situations, and how teachers can create an environment that fosters academic success. This study is significant to educators, as multilingual learners are present in many schools across the country (Freeman et al., 2021). Since the aim of teaching is to ensure academic success for all students, our study offers insight into classroom inclusivity and how this could enhance teacher instruction.

We were interested in practical methods that have helped multilingual learners. The goal was to compile a list of effective strategies that benefit such students to gain and maintain academic success. Our prior experience as students and classroom observers suggested multilingual learners were not always comfortable in the classroom, nor were they given the opportunity to embrace their language and culture in the classroom to facilitate their academic growth. Multilingual learners never seemed to get effective instruction in the classroom, even at an early age. The students were always pulled out of the classroom, and it was unclear if the general education teachers had the training to teach multilingual learners. Samarawickrema and Cleary (2021) noted that, at the university level, “these vulnerable student cohorts . . . are at risk of withdrawing from [the university as well as the] study as they face more hurdles than their traditional counterparts” (p. 13). We were intrigued by different strategies that could be used to help multilingual learners succeed.

In this study, we aimed to define specific ways a teacher can create an inclusive and culturally responsive environment for multilingual learners, which involves using inclusive strategies for “affirming students’ bilingual identity” in the classroom (Freeman et al., 2021, p. 140). Culturally responsive methods take students’ different

cultural backgrounds into consideration when crafting lessons and addressing areas that need improvement among students (Freeman et al., 2021). Additionally, culturally responsive methods help to ensure academic success among multilingual learners since students are being affirmed and supported in multiple ways.

## Research Question

It is common for multilingual learners to fall behind in the curriculum as many mainstream teachers do not consider the needs of students whose first language is not English (Britsch, 2016). Britsch (2016) noted that “the assumption that monolingualism is the norm can place English learners in a ‘catch-up’ position, as if they are behind from the start” (p. 76). Freeman et al. (2021) noted, “as the number of English learners has increased, schools in many parts of the country cannot find teachers with proper certification to teach them” (p. xiv). From these sources, we conclude that multilingual learners are at an immediate disadvantage in the classroom, and teachers are not well-equipped to work with these students. Therefore, we examined the following question: what are culturally relevant strategies that can be used to promote the academic success of multilingual learners?

## Recent Literature

We chose sources based on relevance to the diverse needs of multilingual learners in mainstream classroom settings. The different sources’ studies examined a variety of school settings, ranging from elementary school to universities, as well as various academic subjects. These studies were conducted within the past seven years in different countries with different first languages. Collectively, these studies identified positive outcomes in the teaching practices of multilingual learners. The broad age, subject, and geographical range gave us a wider perspective on approaches that have been successful in the classroom.

## Culturally Responsive Practices

The first study we reviewed, by Baines and Wickham (2018), emphasized that student demographics, as well as the overall school envi-

ronment, dictate the importance of preparing educators to interact with students who do not share the same language or culture. Since many of these students experience challenges in school and pressure at home, teachers must be skilled in using practices that are sensitive to the needs of these young students. One of the most significant ways to support multilingual learners is to show that the teacher cares. Baines and Wickham (2018) highlighted Nel Noddings' "ethic of care," which states that "care must be taken seriously as a major purpose of schools" (p. 15). Teacher care is at the top of the list of ways to help multilingual students achieve their goals and maintain a positive attitude toward learning.

Another important practice when working with multilingual learners is to teach students "how to start" (Baines & Wickham, 2018, p. 18). A teacher can walk students through the thought process for how to start the assignment and then can provide them with guiding steps to finish. Similarly, providing multilingual learners with examples of the assignment may create more clarity and reassurance about the task at hand. Overall, the purpose of these practices is to encourage multilingual learners' success while improving the learning environment for all students.

A 2021 study by Wagner similarly focused on how multilingual teachers' strategies in the classroom can be used by all teachers to encourage multilingual learners. Wagner (2021) focused on classroom-based examples and emphasized that implementing various strategies is essential, as educators must consider the individual needs of students and their parents to foster a positive and successful learning environment.

In Wagner's study, teacher strategies that emerged included translanguaging practices, language choice, teacher inquiry, and the use of multilingual books and other media in the classroom. Translanguaging involves multilingual teachers encouraging students to switch between the home language and English during class instruction (Wagner, 2021, p. 2). In the classroom, "language choice refers to the se-

lection of a primary language," and language mode refers to the "decision to use only one language or more than one and includes whether, and in what ways, a multilingual person chooses to draw on languages other than the primary language" (Wagner, 2021, p. 2).

Teacher inquiry as a strategy "draws on the day-to-day work of teachers as a source of knowledge to inform instruction" (p. 2). In the study, the use of teacher inquiry allowed both multilingual and monolingual teachers to share and collaborate on lessons for the learners' benefit. The use of multilingual books and other media allowed students to feel heard in their school environment and, therefore, more comfortable in the classroom. In reading these books to students, both the teacher and the multilingual student could describe the plot of the story. The studied teacher noted how the student "can explain various meanings of a cultural context or what the word means whereas I [the teacher] can offer how to pronounce that word when I read it on paper" (p. 8). This "cooperative learning" style contributes to the idea behind translanguaging learning, in which students in the classroom switch between English and their "native language" (p. 10). Students are encouraged to use both their native language(s) and their learned language in the classroom so that they may better understand what they are being presented with. Wagner's study greatly contributed to the understanding of classroom practices that foster an overall academically successful environment.

## Specific Pedagogy to Boost Academic Success

Samarawickrema and Cleary (2021) conducted a study to assess whether the Block Model was effective for "non-English speaking background (NESB)" students at a university (p. 13). The Block Model involves splitting the semester into four blocks in which the students only take one class each block. The student is able to focus on understanding one set of material rather than multiple subjects at once. It is up to the student to remain on task with the fast-paced blocks. The test results revealed there was a 16% in-

crease in NESB students' pass rate during the semester. The evidence illustrated a higher success rate in university courses among students whose first language is not English in a setting more catered to individualized learning.

Samarawickrema and Cleary's (2021) research focused on how individual learning leads to the discussion of individual thinking routines. Dajani (2016) examined how thinking routines used as a pedagogy can affect young students learning English. Dajani (2016) stated that "thinking routines are a series of questions that English language teachers can use in their classes to lead students to steps of critical thinking" (p. 2). The goal of Dajani's study was to discover how thinking routines affect engagement, thinking and inquiry skills, and overall understanding among multilingual learners. The classes previously focused only on memorization and regurgitation. The purpose of implementing thinking routines within the study was to change from a surface-level understanding of English to prompting students to be more engaged and gain a deeper understanding of thinking in the English language (Dajani, 2016). Dajani's (2016) noted that "student engagement and participation made students' thinking visible and available for questioning, reviewing, and modifying" (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2008, as quoted in Dajani, 2016, p. 5). This way, the students' thinking routines could positively impact their learning experience while also encouraging them to build confidence in themselves.

In Dajani's (2016) study, the teachers were asked to research and implement thinking routines and modeling in their classrooms, aiming to make the students' thinking visible. The data showed that teachers and students were initially challenged by the thinking routines, but the students showed great improvements when the new structures were implemented. The teachers claimed that their students started to explore and connect ideas, allowing them to dig deeper into the topics they were studying.

The new routines presented opportunities for students to practice English and improve their

academic language skills, which inevitably supported their academic success. Some students used their home language in activities that demanded deep thinking as a result of using thinking routines, which instilled confidence in their abilities. Overall, the thinking routines motivated students to be "more engaged and involved in the activities implemented in the classroom," in turn promoting their academic success (Dajani, 2016, p. 4). Dajani's (2016) evidence from his observations, as well as the students' and teachers' reflections, support the claim that thinking routines are an exemplary approach to teaching multilingual learners.

Baines and Wickham (2018) noted another thinking routine practice with "sensory supports," which are "visual and auditory clues [that] can help fill in the gaps and eliminate confusion" (p. 17). While culturally relevant strategies are important in the classroom, linguistically relevant awareness is just as important. This is met alongside the awareness of anxiety surrounding language acquisition and learning beyond basic comprehension. The use of sensory supports and context clues helped multilingual learners connect their home language to new concepts.

The thinking techniques presented by Dajani (2016) as well as Baines and Wickham (2018) could be applied to phonetic strategies for multilingual learners at the elementary level. Britsch's (2016) study explored a variety of practices to use with multilingual learners when teaching phonics as well. Britsch aimed to prove that the strategies often used to teach word patterns to English-only speakers may not be as effective in use with multilingual learners, specifically those with a Spanish-language background. Teaching students by combining oral language, print, and pictures is more beneficial than teaching the letter sounds by themselves because multilingual learners may have different phoneme sounds in their home language (Britsch, 2016).

Additionally, Britsch (2016) focused on teachers' word choice and how multilingual learners can improperly perceive phrases. The study explained that teachers should be literal and direct

with language. For example, when a nonsense word is presented, instead of asking, “does that sound right?” one should ask, “is this a word in English?” (p. 74). In the context of the article, the question of “does that sound right?” is used to gauge if multilingual learners can tell the difference between a word that sounds like an English word or a word that is actually a word in English. Furthermore, when introducing new words to multilingual learners, it is important to “[work] with familiar words for which the children know meanings” (p. 74). Dost (2016) noted that teachers are not always made aware of the linguistic differences and obstacles present for multilingual learners.

Educators must teach in a way that responds to where students currently are, rather than where they should be. According to Krashen’s Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, language learners acquire more from learning when they have input, such as text and speech, at a level that is attainable for them (Freeman et al., 2021). This hypothesis has led people to reexamine the expectations for language learners in schools, suggesting that targeted, comprehensible interactions with peers and teachers are vital to students’ learning.

Another practice highlighted by our research was the use of explicit and intentional language. It is important for teachers to use language that is attainable for the learners in the classroom. Teachers must be mindful of the language and vocabulary they use so as not to confuse or discourage the learners in their classrooms. Britsch’s (2016) study tested this theory through students being given a word bank when learning rhymes, as opposed to being asked to produce a word on their own (Britsch, 2016). This strategy placed students’ focus on the words from the word bank, connecting them to the language they will use inside and outside of the classroom. The approach gives helps students intentional word choice skills based on actual English words rather than creating anxiety if the students could not come up with their own rhyming words.

Dost (2016) approached the multilingual learn-

ers’ discussion from a different angle. The focus of Dost’s study was to determine if implementing linguistic challenges into the practicum experiences of graduate students would allow them to develop empathy and strategies for teaching multilingual learners. The experiment consisted of graduate students being taught a few vocabulary words in Turkish, and then they were asked to complete comprehension and math questions in Turkish (Dost, 2016). The results indicated that the graduate students’ frustration with an unfamiliar language helped them to better understand the struggles of multilingual learners in the classroom. The purpose of the experiment was to examine whether the studied graduate students experienced increased anxiety and difficulty with content (Dost, 2016). The experiment gave instructors a better understanding of why multilingual learners may not be eager to participate in class discussions or ask questions (Dost, 2016). The study noted that scaffolding allows teachers to “make content comprehensible” among multilingual learners, and identify “the source of learning difficulties” (p. 11). Dost also noted that “participants . . . found scaffolding to be a valuable method for helping English Language Learners . . . learn content and progress in language learning and in reading and writing” (p. 15). Dost concluded with the idea that implementing linguistic experience in practicum assessments and target-based methods in the classroom can offer better experiences for multilingual learners in the classroom as a whole.

Two overarching themes emerged from the scholarship we examined. The first theme was culturally responsive practices to help boost academic success. Educators can implement these strategies to support their multilingual learners. The second theme focused on more specific pedagogical practices for educators and multilingual learners.

## Method and Data Collection

To identify ways teachers can promote the academic success of multilingual learners through responsive strategies, we conducted a qualitative inquiry research project. This project took place over the course of a 15-week semester.

We gained knowledge about our subject by reviewing recent literature. To gain a better perspective, we also conducted observations using ATLAS. ATLAS is “a library of authentic video cases showing National Board Certified Teachers at work in the classroom” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2022). We then interviewed a language specialist who has worked with multilingual learners. Our interviewee had been a language specialist for several years at her rural school district and described to us her personal encounters and strategies that facilitated the academic success of multilingual learners. Our interview with the language specialist took place over Zoom on April 11, 2022, with the interview lasting about 25-30 minutes. We asked the language specialist five questions:

1. What are some of the most important practices a teacher can use in the classroom to support multilingual learners academically?
2. How do you ensure that multilingual learners are getting a balance of exposure to English and their home language?
3. How can we help multilingual learners feel more comfortable participating in the classroom?
4. How can we get parents more involved in students’ learning considering language barriers that might be present?
5. How can we bring language and culture into the classroom to spark discussion among students?

We used thematic analysis as we differentiated between the types of strategies presented in our research to organize our data into two overarching themes. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) defined thematic analysis as “the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” (p. 3352). This helped us see patterns related to our data and areas where information from multiple research sources overlapped. It also allowed us to pick the key pieces of information from our sources in order to better answer our research question. As researchers and prospective teachers, we observed the strategies implemented by teachers in the classroom to gauge their impact on students.

## Findings and Discussion

During our thematic analysis, we separated teaching practices into two categories: culturally responsive practices to support multilingual learners and specific pedagogy to help boost academic success. Based on our initial groupings of teaching practices and specific pedagogy, we created further subgroups within each. Within the theme of culturally responsive practices, we found that teacher care, intentional language choice, and translanguaging are significant practices that can support multilingual learners in their everyday classroom routines. Within the theme of specific pedagogy to boost academic success, we found that thinking routines, multimodal learning, and scaffolding are effective strategies to help multilingual learners succeed academically. Based on the reviewed literature, ATLAS observations, and interview with the language specialist, we found classroom strategies that improved multilingual learner performance.

### Culturally Responsive Practices to Support Multilingual Learners

The first theme we identified focused on the many practices that teachers implement in their classrooms on a daily basis, regardless of the content being taught. The three significant practices we identified in our research were teacher care, intentional language choice, and translanguaging.

#### *Teacher Care*

Our first key finding was that a teacher’s attitude, behavior, and responsiveness to their multilingual students can significantly support the students in the classroom. In our literature review, Baines and Wickham (2018) highlighted the ways in which a teacher’s care can foster multilingual students’ positive attitudes toward learning and emphasized the importance of a positive attitude when working with multilingual learners, which was further supported by our classroom observations and interviewee responses. Based on the language specialist’s expertise as a result of working with multilingual learners daily, they claimed that one of the most important mindsets to attain was the belief that multilingual learners are capable of learning. This mindset

would show in one's teaching, and the positive attitude would reflect in students' motivation to learn. The language specialist felt it was imperative that a teacher has a better understanding of where their students are coming from; so they can build connections. When a positive relationship is formed among teachers, students, and their peers, multilingual learners' growth mindsets can be positively affected and impact these students' academic success for the better.

Our ATLAS observations further revealed that students' engagement was often reliant on the teachers' caring attitudes and enthusiasm. When the teachers created a space that empowered students, the students were more likely to participate and engage in the content. In one ATLAS observation, a multilingual teacher describes her personal experiences with her students regarding her own immigration to the United States (ATLAS, case 1644, n.d.). Sharing her personal experiences further structured the group discussion which took what they were learning about personal struggles from various texts and allowed the individual students to feel comfortable sharing their own personal struggles. The students were more motivated and successful in taking the lesson and applying it to their answers. Ultimately, our findings support the idea that teacher care directly plays into students' attitudes, motivation, and academic success.

### *Intentional Language Choice*

A second practice highlighted by our research was the use of explicit and intentional language. It is important for teachers to use language that is attainable for the learners in the classroom. Teachers must be mindful of the language and vocabulary they use so as not to confuse or discourage the learners in their classrooms. This helps in giving the students intentional word choice skills based on actual English words. We noted this with Britsch's (2016) study and the use of a word bank during our literature review. This activity represents how language learning can be modeled, which we also noted in our interview with the language expert.

When speaking on accessible language modeling, the language expert explained that when she sends forms home to parents, she tries to make the language in the papers accessible to the students' English proficiency level. There is the possibility that the families are not literate. Many teachers do not keep in mind the literal translation of certain phrases, such as figurative language or sarcastic remarks. Teachers' word choice is important to consider in all cases but especially when thinking about how multilingual learners can improperly perceive phrases.

These findings are further supported by our observations of teachers educating multilingual learners. In our ATLAS observations, we noticed the teacher was conscious of their students' language abilities as they spoke (ATLAS, case 1643, n.d.). Moreover, the teacher presented the lesson intentionally and explicitly, making sure the learners understood what they were being asked. In doing so, the clear instruction provided the students and the teacher with a smoother learning experience. As a result, the students seemed engaged in the lesson and confident in participating.

### *Translanguaging*

Our interview with the language specialist provided further insight into the ways in which translanguaging can be used in the everyday classroom to support multilingual learners. They presented us with the idea of allowing students to sit next to someone who speaks their home language. In doing so, students can implement translanguaging more often and feel more comfortable participating. She added the importance of a proper balance between students' home languages and the language they are trying to learn to ensure students are being immersed. Her suggestions support our findings that translanguaging is an exemplary tool to implement in the multilingual classroom.

The teacher in our second observation also allowed students to partake in translanguaging (ATLAS, case 1644, n.d.). Within the video observation, we noticed a learner was sharing her experience with her small group. After struggling a bit with some of the English words, she



discussed her feelings in Spanish. This is the practice of co-languaging we identified in Wagner's (2021) study. Since the student in our observation was allowed to transition between two languages, she was able to exercise her English skills more confidently while not abandoning her native language. This relates to our topic of study surrounding culturally responsive practices that promote academic success among multilingual learners, as the students learning English were able to remain flexible in practicing English while still being allowed to answer confidently in Spanish.

## Specific Pedagogy to Boost Academic Success

In addition to classroom practices that encourage learning, language acquisition, and support of multilingual learners, we found that there is specific pedagogy teachers use in the classrooms to be effective when it comes to the academic success of multilingual learners. The main strategies we identified in our research were thinking routines, multimodal learning, and scaffolding.

### *Thinking Routines*

Thinking routines proved to be one effective strategy in the classroom to assist in the academic success of multilingual learners. During our literature review, we noted how Dajani (2016) documented the success of thinking strategies in the classroom by implementing student reflections and "oral feedback," thus helping students to process information in a thoughtful manner that could help them succeed in the mastery of content (p. 6).

This feedback and routine implementation in the classroom was supported by our ATLAS observations and follows that feedback within classrooms addresses the ways multilingual learners process information can allow them more room for improvement academically. This similarity stems from the ways the middle schoolers in the ATLAS observation are given teacher support that allows the students to develop patterns of thinking where they can come to conclusions about material on their own. The

observation followed middle school-age multilingual learners working with their teacher to separate phrasal structures into different categories of figurative language (ATLAS, Case 367, n.d.). While discussing figurative language, the students would receive feedback from each other and confirmation from the teacher as they developed their thoughts. The students appeared to grow in confidence as they learned with the feedback.

We saw the same verbalization techniques on the part of students and teachers in our third observation. The teacher utilized Baines and Wickham's (2018) suggestion of explicitly teaching students how to start so that students can generate and produce ideas adequately. In this ATLAS video, the teacher began by listing the initial questions about the folktale they read as a class on the board. From there, the teacher let the multilingual students process their questions aloud with their peers, who answered them in return (ATLAS, Case 1643, n.d.). The case study showed that students had more success in sharing and developing ideas about the folktale when they were able to discuss it with one another after direct instruction. They appeared more comfortable with each other and with the material presented having used these thinking strategies. These observations, alongside Dajani's (2016) study, show that thinking strategies are essential to ensure the academic success of multilingual learners. Given the outcome of the case study in which students were able to effectively communicate, we concluded that thinking routines factor into the success of multilingual learners.

### *Multimodal Learning*

When we consider the ways our multilingual students take in and process information, we must also consider the curriculum under which they work. In our survey of selected recent literature, we noted how Samarawickrema and Cleary's (2021) study focused on how inclusive learning modes throughout the curriculum are beneficial among multilingual learners. The use of multimodal learning can be seen in our ATLAS observation. The case study consisted of students

gathering in reading circles and presenting to their groups a response to the prompt addressed by the teacher at the beginning of the class (ATLAS, Case 1644, n.d.). The teacher has utilized auditory, visual, and literary tools with the multilingual students so they could better understand the material. This type of sensory support, as Baines and Wickham (2018) suggested, assisted the multilingual learners in their thinking process and in verbalizing to the teacher why they placed a certain phrase in a certain category. Along with our readings, ATLAS Case 1644 suggests suggest that multimodal learning promoted the academic success of multilingual students.

### *Scaffolding*

The final strategy among specific ways teachers can support multilingual learners in the classroom is scaffolding. One of the scaffolding strategies we found in Britsch's (2016) study involves asking clarifying questions of students. Asking clarifying questions allows multilingual students the time to think through their responses and not feel anxious or wrong while answering. This type of scaffolding allowed the teacher to meet the student where they are in their learning process and helped the students get to where they needed to be without making them feel subpar in the classroom.

Dost (2016) emphasized how scaffolding creates a more comfortable environment for multilingual learners and facilitates a better relationship with the content presented in the classroom. Our interview with the language specialist added some perspective to scaffolding in the classroom. She detailed the importance of "on-ramps" in the scaffolding process, which involve meeting students at their current learning level and gradually leading them to higher forms of thinking and learning without overwhelming them. Such on-ramps might look like simplifying steps at the beginning of lessons or units in the classroom. In our interview and literature review, we can see that scaffolding plays a key role in shaping the way multilingual learners learn in the classroom and how that ensures their academic success.

## Conclusion

In our study, we focused on how educators can ensure the academic success of multilingual learners through culturally relevant teaching strategies. Our method consisted of a literature review, ATLAS classroom video observations, and an interview with a language specialist to answer this overarching question.

We found that culturally responsive teaching practices and specific pedagogical methods ultimately lead to the academic success of multilingual learners. Culturally responsive teaching practices, such as teacher care, intentional language choice, and translanguaging, help educators foster a supportive environment for multilingual learners, leading to better performance. The more specific pedagogical methods, such as thinking routines, multimodal learning, and scaffolding, illustrate activities and attitudes that teachers can implement in the classroom. Since schools are growing more diverse each year, it is imperative that all educators implement these strategies to ensure the success of all their students.

The research we have conducted will help us as educators in the future. The strategies presented will allow us to reaffirm the culture of our multilingual learners, as well as assist in the acquisition of English as they go through school. During our research, we were presented with further questions, such as what might the best curriculum structure be for multilingual learners, as well as how do we define emotional success among multilingual learners in the classroom?

### Limitations

While our research provided a good overview of the current discussion, we had some limitations. We began our research prior to many COVID-19 mandates being lifted and continued to work as regulations changed. Due to the pandemic and the nature of our inquiry project, we were unable to observe actual classrooms in real time. We adjusted for this limitation with our use of ATLAS video observations. Had these circumstances been different, we may have been able to find more concrete evidence for our questions.

## Implications for Future Research

In the process of researching our topic on culturally relevant classroom strategies, other considerations arose, such as how to define academic success, how educators can provide strategies for emotional wellness among their multilingual learners, and how to implement alternative assessment methods that relieve classroom anxiety to improve productivity among multilingual learners. Researching these would allow for improved methodology in teaching multilingual learners so that they may have reduced anxiety in the classroom and improved academic success. Our research provided us with culturally responsive methods and specific pedagogy we should implement in the classroom, as well as a basis for why these strategies work best for students who are learning the English language. Moving forward from this study, we should evaluate the questions stated above so that multilingual learners' education can continue to improve in the ever-changing classroom environment.



## Authors' Notes Liz Shanks

Liz Shanks ('23) from Woodbridge, Virginia, is a senior English major with a minors in Secondary Education, TESOL, and AAAD. She is passionate about writing, music, and the liberal arts more broadly.

Liz plans on pursuing a career in education after graduation, with hopes of teaching English abroad. Teaching multilingual learners will be a huge part of her focus on equitable education for all. This piece gave her the opportunity to explore the ways she can become a better advocate for students who so often feel unheard in their academic needs. Liz hopes this publication acts as a guidebook for teachers who are looking to improve the quality of education for their multilingual students and encourages more research on the topic.



## Mackenzie Weakland

Mackenzie Weakland ('23) from Stafford, Virginia, is an Elementary Education major. She plans to work in an elementary school as a leader and mentor for children. Mackenzie is passionate about culturally responsive teaching and creating a safe space for children to learn, grow, and succeed.

Her work with co-writer Liz Shanks on this semester-long project significantly expanded Mackenzie's understanding of what it means to create a successful learning space for multilingual learners. She is hopeful that the publication of their work will further develop others' understanding of the importance of supporting multilingual learners in schools.

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