SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS:
TRANSLANGUAGING

Did you know that approximately 30 percent of students in Ontario's English-language schools speak a first language other than English? English language learners (ELLs) may be born in Canada or may arrive to Canada as newcomers. As highlighted in Building Better Schools, ETFO strongly advocates that the government increase supports and revise grants to ensure programs for English Language Learners (ELLs) respond to current needs.

Linguistic diversity enhances our classrooms and our practice. More and more educators and researchers have expanded terminology to describe these learners. For example, multilingual language learners (MLLs) is a term that supports an asset perspective highlighting the linguistic resources learners bring to the classroom.

Over the years, ETFO has developed resources with members to support members working with MLLs. This fall, look out for a new series! These professional learning resources will include practical strategies for your practice on such topics as first language, program adaptations, collaboration and co-teaching as well as supporting early reading.

In this edition of Voice, *we highlight key ideas from* Supporting Multilingual Language Learners: Translanguaging. *These ideas for day-to-day practice are beneficial for student learning and well-being. Translanguaging also supports the idea of building shared linguistic power within the learning community. This new resource series is available to members as a free download at etfo.ca.*

WHAT IS TRANSLANGUAGING?

Translanguaging is the process of using all of our linguistic resources to understand and communicate (Garcia, 2009). These linguistic resources can include using words, phrases, and sentences in different languages, alongside English, to communicate. For instance, a learner may substitute a word or phrase from their first language when writing or use both a first language and English to confirm understanding with a peer or educator who also speaks the same language, or use a combination of multiple languages, gestures, and expressions in small-group work conversations with peers. An educator and learners might co-create a multilingual word wall that showcases vocabulary from students' home languages. Each of these practices support learners' thinking, learning, and communication.

When educators provide instructional translanguaging opportunities for multilingual language learners (MLLs), we honour and affirm their identities and ways of knowing. When MLLs use translanguaging practices, they share and develop the linguistic skills, abilities, and practices that make up their linguistic repertoires, including English (Garcia & Wei 2014).

How might the languages of multilingual language learners (MLLs) be affirmed and leveraged as a tool for learning in the classroom and school?

WHY IS TRANSLANGUAGING IMPORTANT?

Translanguaging practices offer instructional adaptations so that learners can engage in rich, complex, grade-level texts and tasks.

When educators support MLLs to use a personally affirming linguistic resource, such as a first language, it empowers MLLs to demonstrate their understanding in a manner that does not make full English proficiency a barrier.

Translanguaging practices support learners to meet language demands in the classroom.

These demands include using subject-specific vocabulary and using language skills to understand and communicate. A multilingual learner can use a first language as a foundation upon which to build English proficiency to meet these language demands (Cummins, 2000). As educators supporting translanguaging to build linguistic knowledge, we might support a student to use multiple linguistic resources, such as a first language or a mix of languages, to communicate subject-specific vocabulary or as guides to help them identify patterns in English.

Translanguaging practices are culturally responsive strategies that centre and affirm learners' multilingual identities.

As culturally responsive educators, we can empower MLLs to use multilingual skills, abilities, and practices by drawing upon MLLs' "funds of knowledge," which include their skills, lived experiences, ways of knowing, and abilities (Moll et al., 2009). Translanguaging dismantles the hierarchy of English over other languages and honours learners' way of communicating in everyday life.

Translanguaging practices foster a sense of student belonging and well-being at school and beyond.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM
Supporting MLLs through translanguaging might look like:

Centring, validating, and celebrating MLLs' diverse linguistic repertoires by encouraging multilingualism.

Examples include:

- school displays of the languages spoken in the school

- multilingual word walls with subject-specific vocabulary

- opportunities for learners to share their languages by presenting school announcements in multiple languages

- hosting a language showcase inviting members of the school community

Pairing a multilingual language learner with a language buddy who shares their language and provides opportunities for the pair to use their languages to share and learn vocabulary, content, and language skills from each other throughout the school day.

Offering differentiated tasks that empower MLLs to communicate in ways that maximize their communicative potential.

- Use translation tools. For example, you may present material in English, and offer a tool to support the learner to translate the material into the learner's preferred language. The learner could also speak or type their response in their first preferred language, which the educator can translate. For multilingual learners who are working towards proficiency in their first language or who may have significant gaps in schooling that have impacted their language development, consider scaffolding learning by using oral language and speech-to-text where needed.

- Adapt programming to accept a range of student products and conversations by empowering MLLs to demonstrate learning using a linguistic resource of their choice (e.g., summarizing a concept orally in their first language instead of in writing).

Modelling multilingualism as an asset that supports learning.

- (Co-) construct learning goals and success criteria that actively encourage learners to use linguistic resources of their choice (e.g., first languages) to communicate their learning.

- Model and scaffold by using your own shared linguistic repertoire in teaching and learning. For example, you may use a language you and learners share to communicate.

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