

عربي
AND THE “DEARBORN BUBBLE”:
MULTILINGUAL PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF DISTRICT EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

With the highest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States, Dearborn, Michigan has a unique quality that preserves its residents' Arab roots despite pressure to follow dominant cultural norms in the U.S. As a space that is both Arab and American, the Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008) created by Arab Americans in the Dearborn community has greatly shaped the educational experiences for students in the school district. Particularly, the Dearborn Public Schools (DPS) have long catered to their Arabic-speaking students, the third most common home language spoken by students in the United States. However, the extent to which the district's inclusive policies have shaped daily classroom practices for these students offers opportunities for deeper analysis.

Guided by Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) and the three components of translanguaging pedagogy (*stance*, *design*, and *shifts*; García, 2009; García et al., 2016), this embedded case study explores district educators' beliefs and practices regarding multilingualism across the Dearborn Public Schools, questioning: (1) What are the beliefs and perceived practices of district educators who work with Arabic-speaking students regarding teaching and learning in multiple languages? (2) How are teachers' beliefs and perceptions about multilingual practices reflected in their classroom practices with Arabic-speaking students? Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with nine district educators, a teacher questionnaire (MULTITEACH; Calafato, 2020), and classroom observations of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade ELA lessons with follow up teacher interviews.

The findings revealed a divide between social and academic use of Arabic. District educators underscored the city's long-standing support for Arab American communities, such as halal food offerings, districtwide holiday acknowledgments, and multilingual family communications. Yet, within mainstream ELA classrooms, Arabic rarely surfaced as a

recognized academic resource. Teachers described feeling unprepared or constrained by standardized testing, curricula emphasizing English-only proficiency, and their own limited Arabic skills. Although many expressed openness to leveraging students' home languages, they lacked consistent institutional guidance on how to embed Arabic into lesson planning or spontaneous instruction. Consequently, no direct translanguaging pedagogies were documented in classroom observations. Instead, English uniformly dominated each lesson, even though the vast majority of students came from Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

Taken together, Dearborn's history of responsive community engagement suggests that embracing Arabic academically is a logical extension of the district's overall inclusivity. Strengthening teacher training, promoting co-teaching models, and revisiting curriculum expectations could help sustain genuine multilingual learning spaces. By systematically bridging school policy with instructional practice, Dearborn Public Schools can model how U.S. districts might transform from English-centric norms to truly multilingual ecologies (García & Menken, 2015; García & Sánchez, 2015). Ultimately, this study underscores both the possibility and complexity of elevating a socially valued home language into a fully recognized academic tool.

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to my farah

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the United States, a majority of classroom teachers are white and primarily monolingual (Taie & Lewis, 2022), despite an increasingly diverse student population. According to Pew Research Center, 80 percent of public school teachers in the U.S. are white, while only 46 percent of students share this identity (Schaeffer, 2024). This significant demographic gap is especially important when considering the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students in public schools. Teacher preparation programs, while increasingly addressing cultural competence and inclusive practices, often still emphasize monolingual norms (Barros et al., 2020; Stillman & Palmer, 2024). As a result, many teachers feel unprepared to support multilingual learners, inadvertently reinforcing English as the dominant language in their classrooms (de Jong & Gao, 2022; Ponzio & Deroo, 2021). More so, despite this growing recognition of multilingual education, Arabic-speaking students, in particular, continue to face misrepresentation, marginalization, and limited access to linguistically and culturally responsive support in schools (Abu El-Haj, 2006; Wingfield, 2006). This reality underscores the need for research-based examples of how educators can foster affirming environments for these learners, especially with approximately 21 percent of individuals in the United States coming from homes that speak a language other than English (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Addressing these complexities involves developing more deliberate approaches to supporting linguistic diversity in teacher preparation programs, particularly in contexts where a significant portion of the student body speaks languages other than English.

One community where these challenges and opportunities intersect is Dearborn, Michigan, home to the largest concentration of Arab American population in the nation. Michigan State University (MSU), situated just a short drive from Dearborn, presents a valuable

context for considering the intersection of teacher education and local community realities. While MSU's teacher preparation program has evolved in response to a diversifying student body across U.S. schools, some key gaps remain in addressing the linguistic realities of nearby communities. For example, despite a proximity to Dearborn, Arabic is notably absent from recognized world language offerings in their Post BA World Language Teacher Certification Program (MSU College of Education, n.d.-a). In addition, the Global Educators Cohort Program (GECP; MSU College of Education, n.d.-b), though it includes an annual immersive field experience in Dearborn, is limited to those who opt into this specialized track within the teacher preparation program. By examining how Dearborn educators support their Arabic-speaking students across the district and in their classrooms, this dissertation can generate insights for MSU's teacher preparation efforts and inform broader conversations within teacher education that can better support Arabic-speaking students.

In English-only classrooms, these students with linguistically diverse backgrounds are expected to replace their minoritized language(s) with the socially constructed dominant language (English; Vogel & García, 2017). These expectations increase experiences of language loss among multilingual students, in which students lose their home languages when there is a lack of exposure in their educational settings (e.g., through print, media, and instruction; Fishman, 1966; García & Wei, 2014; Lambert & Freed, 1982). Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) and contact zones (Pratt, 1991) are considered spaces where two cultures clash and grapple with one another. To step beyond the meeting of these two spaces is to create a Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), in which this new space can be used to embrace new ways of thought, practice, and experience. As such, there is literature that promotes the creation of a Third Space with students' multilingualism in their learning through translanguaging, which means providing

opportunities for students to use their full linguistic repertoires to communicate ideas, access information, and complete tasks (García, 2009).

In this study, I explore the potentiality of Dearborn, Michigan as a Third Space for Arabic-speaking students in U.S. public schools. Specifically, I focus on the district educators in the Dearborn Public Schools, examining how they engage with and support the multilingual student population, especially Arabic-speaking students. While I discuss the multilingual students themselves as part of the broader context, the central focus of this study is on the educators, administrators, and policymakers who influence these students' educational experiences. By examining these district educators, I aim to understand how institutional decisions, pedagogical practices, and language policies shape the educational experiences of multilingual students in this unique sociocultural setting (Gutiérrez, 2008). At the same time, my personal connection to this topic extends beyond academic inquiry. Having grown up in a community closely tied to Dearborn and later teaching in a similar educational environment, these experiences have given me firsthand insight into how educators' beliefs and institutional policies impact Arabic-speaking students. I delve deeper into how my background informs this research in my positionality statement (see **Chapter Three: Methodology**).

This study aims to add to literacy and educational research on Arabic-speaking students in U.S. schools, especially with existing literature on translanguaging and multilingual and multicultural education that support this exploration (Bauer et al., 2020; Daniel & Pacheco, 2015; Gándara, 2016; García, 2009; Nuñez, et al., 2020; Palmer & Martinez, 2013; Rowe & Miller, 2015). By centering a language predominant in the U.S. but is less similar to English than the more commonly researched, Spanish, there is much to be learned about Arabic-speaking students through an exploration of these students and their schooling. With Spanish being the

second most spoken language in the United States after English and sharing many similarities between the languages, it follows that many studies have used Spanish-speaking learners as their participants. As such, using Spanish as the language most researched among multilingual learners in U.S. schools, researchers have explored the benefits of promoting students' home language within the classroom to encourage their growth academic performance (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022; García, 2009; Palmer & Martinez, 2013).

Arabic is the third most common home language spoken by students after Spanish and English in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Additionally, Arabic differs from English in many ways, including directionality (writing right to left instead of left to right), orthography, phonology, morphology, and syntax (Alshalaan, 2020). Moreover, as a language so commonly spoken in the United States due to its historical and political significance in the U.S. context, Spanish language resources (e.g., Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers and Spanish/English bilingual books) are much more readily available to students in U.S. schools (e.g., *SpringBoard English Language Arts* curricula; CollegeBoard, 2021). On the other hand, while there has been some research on the language practices of Arabic-speaking students in U.S. schools (Akasha, 2013; Palmer et al., 2007; Sehlaoui, 2008), research proposing new ways of thinking and practicing in support of multilingual learners still has so much potential for growth regarding Arabic-speaking students. This research can progress the literature about teacher education in support of multilingualism, specifically among pre-service teachers and their Arabic-speaking students in predominantly English-only monolingual school systems.

Historical Context

Although the presence of Arabs in the United States has been recorded as early as the 1800s, it was in the early 20th century that many Arabs immigrated to the United States (Arab

American National Museum [AANM] & Kayyali, 2019). Since then, there have been multiple waves of immigration from the Arab World, a group of 22 countries across Southwest Asia and North Africa that make up the Arab League with intersecting languages and cultures supporting the bonds between these countries (AANM & Kayyali, 2019). Although all of the Arab countries recognize Arabic as their official language, some of these countries also communicate in languages other than Arabic. For example, there is a presence of both colonial languages, such as English and French, and indigenous languages, such as Kurdish and Armenian in these countries (Hassanpour et al., 2012; Lachkar, 2022). While formal Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) is typically only used in professional or educational settings, most heritage Arabic speakers communicate in a dialect unique to their region of the Arab World (Dialectal Arabic; Alsudais et al., 2022). For example, the Levantine dialect of Arabic (e.g., Jordan and Palestine) differs from the Gulf dialect of Arabic (e.g., Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates). As such, while Arabic is the official language in the Arab World, the many dialects and formations of Arabic spoken in these countries can differ greatly from one another (Alsudais et al., 2022).

Since the arrival of the first Arab immigrants to the United States as far back as the mid-1800s, communities of Arabs formed across major cities such as New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit (AANM & Kayyali, 2019). Today, the city of Dearborn in Michigan, a short drive from Detroit, comprises the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States (Stiffler, 2018). Their public school system has long served the large number of Arabic-speaking students with support from the community for more Arabic language and cultural exposure in their district (Jassem, 2018). Additionally, the creation of Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in the 1970s, one of many Arab American organizations in the United States, has expanded into the nation's largest Arab American community non-profit

(AANM & Kayyali, 2019). Based in Dearborn, Michigan, ACCESS's growth has led to the development of community services such as employment opportunities, family and youth services, research development, and the establishment of the Arab American National Museum (AANM; Stiffler, 2018).

In the same ways Arabic dialects vary across the Arab world, so do cultures, traditions, and beliefs. For this reason, there are many subgroups across the Arab community in Dearborn. Today, approximately 50 percent of Dearborn's population is of Arab descent (United States Census Bureau, 2023). Historically, the Lebanese community—part of the Levantine Arab population—is considered the oldest Arab group in this Southeast Michigan city, with nearly 45 percent of the Arab population being from Lebanese descent (Baker et al., 2006; Schopmeyer, 2011). Overall, a majority of Dearborn Arabs are comprised of a Levantine Arab population with 15 percent Palestinians, 13 percent Iraqi, and 3 percent Syrian Arabs (Baker et al., 2006). Comprising 14 percent of the Dearborn Arab population, most of the Yemeni community there immigrated to the United States more recently than their other Arab counterparts (Baker et al., 2006). Neighboring cities also hold a high population of Arab communities that come from largely Muslim and Christian backgrounds. For example, Hamtramck, a city close to Dearborn, is predominantly Muslim Yemeni. Within these Arab communities, the timing of immigration has influenced how established each group is, resulting in skewed representation across the broader population of Dearborn. This is prevalent in local research, community outreach, political representation, and in educational policy making (Schopmeyer, 2011).

In the United States, Arab Americans are often conflated with Muslim Americans, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (Newstreet et al., 2018). Although these two identities have large overlaps with just over 90 percent of Arabs being Muslim, they are distinct,

with less than 20 percent of Muslims worldwide being Arab (Pew Research Center, 2011; Zeghal & Waldman, 2023). Specifically, within the United States, 25 percent of Arab Americans are Muslim and roughly 70 percent are Christian (Insight into Diversity, 2021). Because Arab and Muslim American identities are often misrepresented in the United States, students from these backgrounds have experienced marginalization in their school settings (Abu El-Haj, 2006; Wingfield, 2006). This conflation overlooks the diversity within these communities and contributes to a lack of culturally responsive support. With nearly three million Arab Americans in the United States (Stephan, 2021), the value of educational research underscoring the unique opportunities within the educational system for Arabic-speaking students can lead to the dismantling of oppressive school pedagogies and curricula informed by outdated and harmful stereotypes (Wingfield, 2006).

Additionally, despite these high numbers of Arab Americans in the United States, existing policies and practices have stunted the representation of this population of individuals. For example, when considering the United States Census, individuals from “Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” are labeled as “White” (United States Census Bureau, 2024). This labeling originates from various historical events where Arab immigrants in the United States sought to be considered “White” to be granted entry into the country, and further to be granted citizenship. For example, the federal court case of 1909 with George Shishim, a Christian Lebanese-Syrian immigrant who argued he was “White” and not from a “Chinese-Mongolian ancestry” by citing Jesus as coming from the same land as he came from (Arab American Historical Foundation, n.d.; Beydoun, 2018). Because American whiteness was and has been largely influenced by Christianity, the judge who ruled on this case was swayed by Shishim’s argument (Arab American Historical Foundation, n.d.; Beydoun, 2018). Neither “White” nor “Asian,” these

boxes, “based upon self-identification,” (United States Census Bureau, 2024) largely contribute to the misrepresentation of Arabs in the United States. This classification of Arabs as “White” has continued today despite numerous petitions and studies that call upon the U.S. government to recognize Arabs as “Middle Eastern North African (MENA)” (Maghbouleh et al., 2022). Recently, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued new standards requiring MENA to be recognized as a distinct race and ethnicity category across federal agencies within the next five years, which will also be included in the 2030 U.S. Census (Marks et al., 2024). However, until these new standards take effect, communities such as Dearborn, Michigan, remain misrepresented in official data. For instance, while Dearborn Public Schools primarily serve a historically marginalized and underrepresented community—Arab American students—data websites funded by the U.S. Department of Education, such as the National Center for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data, indicate a 90–95 percent “White” student population across the district’s schools (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Despite this misleading representation of the student demographics in Dearborn, Michigan, the unique schooling environment in Dearborn can be considered through Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017), which emphasizes how students’ values, beliefs, experiences, and learning styles are influenced by their linguistic and cultural interactions within their communities. This is highlighted across various ways the Dearborn community has supported the cultural and linguistic diversity of its members. For example, the decision for Arabic to be taught as an option of a foreign language for students across the Dearborn Public Schools represents one example of such support and inclusion of Arabic into educational practices (Jassem, 2018). Although English is seen as an academic goal in these education settings, as evidence by the district’s use of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

(SIOP; Echevarría et al., 2004), an instructional toolkit to support English learners in mainstream classrooms, district educators in this space have emphasized the importance of maintaining students' linguistic backgrounds in Arabic. This is emphasized by Dearborn's Title III plan to partially fund educators in their district pursuing bilingual/ESL endorsements through extended training or by taking credits at a university (Human Resources Department, n.d.)

Situating the Research: Dearborn amid the Palestinian Genocide

With Arabs comprising more than half of Dearborn's population, it is important to situate this dissertation within the broader circumstances surrounding data collection. During the time of data collection, the genocide in Palestine was (and still is) unfolding (Amnesty International, 2024), and it weighed heavily on the Dearborn community—myself included (Hammoud, 2024). Residents across the city organized boycotts of products tied to entities supporting the violence, with Arab community groups coming together in solidarity against the injustices occurring. One particular moment that occurred during a day meant for classroom observations was the Global Strike for Palestine (Al Jazeera, 2023), when students and other community members refused to purchase goods, go to work, or attend school, using their collective absence to demand attention to the genocide. More so, students, their families, district educators, and many others in the community participated in protests on the weekends. There were visible expressions of solidarity everywhere, from students wearing kuffiyehs in school hallways, teachers and district administrators discussing whether and how to address the genocide in their classrooms, and local businesses joining relief efforts through monetary donations. As a Palestinian researcher, I felt deeply connected to the atmosphere of urgency and resistance that permeated into the daily life in Dearborn during this time. This heightened collective consciousness and engagement form the critical context under which the data for this dissertation was gathered.

Research Questions

Given that Arabic is the most commonly spoken language among Arabs and Dearborn has the highest concentration of Arabs in the United States, I am interested in educators' views on the role of Arabic in instruction as well as the classroom language practices among teachers and their Arabic-speaking students. In this study, using García et al.'s (2016) three components of translanguaging pedagogy (*stance*, *design*, and *shifts*) and Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017; CMLA) alongside a newly developed questionnaire on language teachers' multilingualism (MULTITEACH; Calafato, 2020), I aim to explore educators' language practices during instruction and whole-classroom talk with Arabic-speaking students in a predominantly Arab American school district. To understand district educators' multilingual perspectives and practices within the study's context, nine district educators were interviewed, including three English Language Arts classroom teachers. Additionally, multiple observations were conducted of each of the three teachers' classrooms (sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, respectively). This research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs and perceived practices of district educators who work with Arabic-speaking students regarding teaching and learning in multiple languages?
2. How are teachers' beliefs and perceptions about multilingual practices reflected in their classroom practices with Arabic-speaking students?

The chapters that follow are organized to build toward answering each of the research questions in a thoughtful and grounded way. In the next chapter, I lay out the theoretical framework and review relevant literature to position the study within existing research and provide context for the key concepts. Chapter three explains the methodology, describing how the study was designed, the sources of data, and the processes of collecting and analyzing that

data. Chapter four presents the findings, addressing each research question in depth using data gathered from the Dearborn Public Schools. Finally, in chapter five, I bring everything together in a discussion and conclusion. Here, I connect the findings back to the literature and theoretical framework, reflecting on their implications and situating them within the larger conversation in the field.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Educators and Their Students

Throughout this chapter, I will often refer to students who come from Arab or Arabic-speaking backgrounds. It is necessary to spend this time understanding who these students are and the ways in which educational literature has spoken of them. Arguably, it is even more valuable to consider these students as the leaders in their homes, their city, their school, and more specifically, their English Language Arts classrooms. This is why the theories I will be discussing, like Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), translanguaging pedagogy (García, 2009; García et al., 2016), and Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) provide a valuable lens in understanding the spaces these students are functioning in. However, by writing about the district educators and students in the school district, and in asking my research questions and engaging in data collection, I place the focus on educators to pave forward a conversation on their potential influence on Arab students in the Dearborn Public Schools. These district educators primarily center classroom teachers, but also include principals, district leaders, literacy coaches, and others who have a hand in shaping the schooling experience for these students.

There are a few reasons why I chose to focus my study on the educators in this study. While translanguaging (García, 2009) is considered a student-centered practice, valuing the ways in which students engage in their linguistic repertoires to make meaning and access information, it is also balanced alongside power dynamics in the classroom. Oftentimes, teachers unconsciously act as the gatekeepers of language use in their classrooms (Aukerman, 2007; Lucas, 2011), having control over how languages are used, valued, and marginalized in classrooms. These beliefs and practices then influence whether students' languages beyond

English are treated as assets or obstacles in their schooling. By focusing on teachers, I hope to engage with principles of Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA; García, 2017) through teachers' awareness of language hierarchies, their support of multilingual students, and recognition of potential language oppression in their schools and classrooms. García (2017) highlights how teacher's awareness and beliefs towards multilingualism often shape classroom environments. This study has the potential to uncover how these beliefs either perpetuate or challenge deficit perspectives that see multilingual students as lacking, rather than as linguistically rich (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Especially when teachers are seen as facilitators in their students learning (Freire, 2000), their choices of integrating students' linguistic repertoires shape not only academic outcomes, but also students' sense of belonging and identity in the classroom. With Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP; Echevarría et al., 2004) as the official instructional protocol in the district, investigating teacher practices can highlight the effectiveness of professional development programs that often encourage "fidelity" (Echevarria, et al., 2011), specifically in equipping teachers to work with multilingual students.

A central theme in many of the studies in this chapter is how educators are engaging with or resisting the societal norms that devalue students' linguistic diversity, which is transferable in a district like Dearborn's where high numbers of students speak multiple languages. Beyond teachers' responses to students' multilingualism are teachers' willingness to be the initiators of linguistic diversity in their classrooms and affirming students' cultural and linguistic identities. This shift is particularly important in classrooms with white, monolingual teachers (i.e. the demographics of this study and the majority of U.S. classrooms; Taie & Lewis, 2022), who may feel unequipped to handle the linguistic diversity in their classrooms. Thus, moving away from

traditional, deficit-oriented frameworks that reinforce rigid language boundaries and create more inclusive and dynamic learning environments (García, 2017). Rather than asking how students are engaging in translanguaging in the classroom (Daniel & Pacheco, 2015), this study considers how educators incorporate translanguaging in their pedagogy as they negotiate curriculum demands with the linguistic realities of multilingual students (García & Menken, 2010; Vaish, 2019). CMLA models how true translanguaging practices that step beyond translations and code-switching is understanding the underlying social justice implications of translanguaging (García, 2017). Embracing multilingual practices in schooling challenges traditional notions of academic success and access to opportunities in a society that has defaulted “English” as the ultimate tool towards success and access to opportunities—a norm that often expects linguistically diverse students to dismantle rather than the educators who often dictate the outcomes of these students through grades, awards, and parent interactions (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022; Garcia et al., 2021).

Ultimately, systematic change tends to be top-down (García & Menken, 2010), driven by policymakers, district leaders, school boards, curriculum developers, and others who may not have direct access to the classroom. Moreover, there are those who are more closely engaged in classrooms, such as literacy coaches, principals, and teachers, who have been given the protocols, curricula, and goals to then be passed onto their students. It is ambitious, and potentially unfair to teachers, to assume systemic change is possible from just their pedagogical choices. Teachers often operate within long-standing systems that privilege monolingualism and English dominance (English & Varghese, 2010; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005), making it difficult for them to break away from these ingrained norms. While teacher preparation programs have been cited to include more training opportunities and resources for pre-service teachers to

support their multilingual students (Banegas et al., 2024; Burton et al., 2024; Cárdenas Curiel et al., 2024), a large percentage of teachers in the U.S. are monolingual, and teacher preparation programs are not yet adequately designed to prepare them for multilingual classrooms. This highlights an issue of transferability from training to be teachers to actually teaching in classrooms with linguistically diverse students (Grossman et al., 2009).

In the struggle with translating theory to practice, there is an overarching consideration of how possible it is for the majority white, monolingual U.S. teacher workforce to enact multilingual practices such as translanguaging in their classrooms (Barros et al., 2020; Prasad & Heidt, 2023). Despite having education courses that encourage pre-service teachers to release control in their future classrooms and support their students' multilingualism, once in the field, teachers cite feeling anxious about managing languages they do not speak or understand, leading to a preference for sticking with monolingual norms in the classroom (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019; 2023). This is exacerbated by lack of institutional support as precedingly noted, where teachers are encouraged to focus on standardized testing (i.e. NWEA and PSATs in the Dearborn Public Schools), which reinforce monolingual language practices, especially in English Language Arts classrooms where much of the preparation/consequences of these tests happen (Aukerman, 2007). Thus, without significant institutional support, the theories these teachers come into their classrooms with get set aside whether or not these teachers have unconscious biases that associate academic success with English proficiency (Cummins, 2017).

This study aims to observe and make practical suggestions for how teachers can more effectively support multilingual students. Through interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations, I seek to understand current practices and identify existing or new practices to help teachers overcome challenges like monolingual norms, time constraints, and institutional

pressures. Rather than highlighting deficits in teaching, the focus will be on ways to empower and equip teachers with concrete tools and frameworks to incorporate students' linguistic resources in a meaningful, supportive way. In the following sections, I discuss the theories used to situate this embedded case study across the Dearborn Public Schools.

Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter sets the foundation for exploring how educators can better support multilingual students, specifically within English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms in Dearborn, Michigan. I review frameworks, such as Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) and translanguaging (García, 2009), which highlight how language and power dynamics shape student identity and success. Moreover, I discuss the role of community spaces in language practices (Gutiérrez, 2008), the institutional impact of ELA classrooms on language development, and the influence of language policies, teacher practices, and curriculum on students' schooling experiences.

This work draws on translanguaging pedagogies and theories (García, 2009), Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017), problem-posing education (Freire, 2000), and linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas & Villegas, 2011), integrating insights from the broader body of literature on Arabic-speaking students and their experiences in U.S. schools. By conceptualizing Dearborn as a Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), this section underscores the need for teachers to adopt *stances* (García et al., 2016) that recognize and affirm students' linguistic resources, moving beyond traditional monolingual norms to promote more inclusive educational practices. This chapter provides a backdrop for understanding the challenges and opportunities in Dearborn Public Schools' ELA classrooms, guiding the study's focus on educators' perspectives and practices of multilingualism in their classrooms.

Dearborn, Michigan: A Third Space

Bhabha's (1990) Third Space refers to the space in between dominant cultural identities and those who are marginalized or excluded by them. The Third Space is created through the interaction of different cultures, which results in the emergence of new cultural forms and identities that resist assimilation into dominant cultural norms (Bhabha, 1990). This space is flexible and constantly changing, where meanings and identities are not fixed but are shaped and reshaped through interaction. In this space, dichotomies, like colonizer and colonized or self and other, are broken down, allowing for the creation of new, mixed identities. These identities do not fully belong to any one group but combine elements from multiple cultures, forming something entirely new. The Third Space challenges the idea that any culture or identity is pure or unchanging. Instead, it shows that identities are built through relationships and experiences, and they can evolve over time. Bhabha (1990) highlights that the Third Space is powerful because it offers a way to resist dominant systems of power. It allows marginalized people to redefine themselves and their place in the world. Rather than being forced to fit into dominant ideas, they can create new meanings and possibilities, making the Third Space a site of transformation (Bhabha, 1990).

Similarly, Gutiérrez (2008) uses Third Space to describe a space of critical dialogue and reflection between the oppressed and the oppressors. She emphasizes the importance of creating a space of understanding where different perspectives can be shared and where new forms of liberation can be imagined. This Third Space is not just a meeting point but a dynamic and transformative environment where traditional power structures are questioned and redefined. It centers on the lived experiences of marginalized communities, using those experiences as a foundation for learning and collective action. Central to Gutiérrez's conception of the Third

Space is the idea of sociocritical literacy, which she defines as the ability to critically analyze and historicize everyday and institutional literacy practices. In the context of education, sociocritical literacy challenges conventional approaches to teaching and learning that often perpetuate inequities. Instead of treating literacy as a neutral skill, it reframes it as a powerful tool for critical social thought and transformative action. Students are encouraged to connect their personal narratives and sociohistorical realities to broader systemic issues, fostering a deeper understanding of how oppression operates and how it can be resisted. In practice, sociocritical literacy redefines what counts as learning by prioritizing dialogue, collaboration, and the integration of students' lived experiences into the curriculum. This approach disrupts hierarchical models of education that position teachers as sole authorities and students as passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, the Third Space becomes a shared environment where both students and educators engage in reciprocal learning. Through practices like storytelling, critical writing, and collective problem-solving, students not only acquire academic skills, but also develop the tools to reimagine their roles within society and advocate for change.

Gutiérrez's (2008) work demonstrates how sociocritical literacy in the Third Space can transform education into a practice of freedom, where marginalized students are empowered to see themselves as "historical actors" (p. 154), who are active participants in shaping their own futures. By creating opportunities for critical reflection and collective action, this approach reclaims education as a means of fostering equity and justice. Representation of Arabic-speaking students in educational research literature can contribute to the development of a Third Space for these students in U.S. educational contexts. Specifically, by framing the Dearborn Public Schools as a site of transformation for these students in mainstream classrooms, research can explore the characteristics of this Third Space, in which the accumulation of experiences, interactions, and

details of community (i.e. linguistic practices, food, cultural and religious functions, schooling decisions, etc.) have supported an environment for students to exist beyond what mainstream U.S. public schools have standardized (i.e. white and/or English-only monolingual).

Mainstream curricula in U.S. public schools have most often centered around monolingual perspectives with a push for English-only education (Gándara, 2016). However, this is challenged by the large population of multilingual students in U.S. classrooms who may benefit from languages beyond English in their personal and academic growth. As these students come from various backgrounds, the assimilationist structures of U.S. curricula do not typically value students' multilingualism as assets to facilitate their learning (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022; Gándara, 2016). By renegotiating what education is for multilingual and multicultural students in these settings, these students are supported in ways that consider their identities as valuable to their education rather than impediments. This is underscored in Rowe and Miller's (2015) study with students engaging in academic content using electronic devices. In the classroom observed, multimodality in learning is explored as a result of supporting these multilingual students. Findings showed that through the educators' culturally responsive instructional strategies, student engagement and comprehension increased using multi-modal translanguaging. In this context, multi-modal translanguaging refers to how students not only draw on their full linguistic repertoires across languages, but also communicate and make meaning through multiple modes (e.g. oral language, writing, visual images, gestures, digital tools, and other semiotic resources). As an act of "linguaging," an ongoing process of language creation to comprehend and interact with the world (Becker, 1988), the multi-modal translanguaging in Rowe and Miller's (2015) study echoes Canagarajah's definition of

communication that exists across modalities (2013) as well as the creation of a Third Space for multilingual learners in U.S. classrooms (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008).

The concept of Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008) is relevant when discussing Arabic-speaking students in U.S. schooling and their representation in educational research because it highlights the importance of recognizing the cultural hybridity and diversity within this population. Arabic-speaking students in the U.S. can experience challenges related to cultural differences and struggle to reconcile their cultural identities with dominant cultural norms in the U.S. (Najjar et al., 2019). By acknowledging the existence of a Third Space, researchers can explore the unique experiences of Arabic-speaking students in the U.S. and the ways in which they negotiate their cultural identities in a multicultural context. This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the educational experiences of Arabic-speaking students and can help to identify strategies for educators in supporting students' academic and social success. Moreover, this can involve examining the ways in which Arabic-speaking students draw on their cultural backgrounds to navigate their academic and social experiences, as well as the challenges they may face in reconciling their cultural identities with the dominant cultural norms in the U.S. education system (Mango, 2012; Najjar et al., 2019). Acknowledging and valuing the unique cultural perspectives and experiences of Arabic-speaking students, researchers and educators can work towards promoting greater equity and inclusivity in U.S. education.

By framing Dearborn through the lens of Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), this study explores the intersection of language, culture, and identity within the community, thus highlighting the complex realities that shape both students' and teachers' experiences in this educational setting. This framing is particularly relevant because it helps contextualize the roles of teachers within this multicultural and multilingual environment. In Dearborn, where a large

Arab American population resides, Third Space emphasizes the necessity of frameworks like Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) and translanguaging (García, 2009) to help teachers navigate the sociolinguistic landscape. Teachers in Dearborn are not just delivering curriculum content, they are engaging in an ongoing negotiation between cultural practices and the linguistic diversity of their students. Recognizing Third Space as part of the setting allows me to foreground the importance of supporting multilingualism in the classroom through these critical frameworks.

Overall, using the concept of Third Space to paint the picture of Dearborn, its community, and the school district is crucial in providing a rich contextual framework for this study. While Third Space, as introduced by Bhabha (1990) and later applied in educational contexts, refers to the hybrid space where different cultural, linguistic, and social practices converge, I utilize it to set the tone for the study's setting rather than as an analytical tool. Third Space allows me to acknowledge the interactions between students' home lives, community, and school, where diverse identities and linguistic resources come into play. As a study that investigates the multilingual perspectives and practices of Dearborn Public Schools' district educators, recognizing this hybrid space offers insight into the schooling environment in which these educators operate. With the representation of Arab background students driving this study, using Third Space helps to situate the school district and its community in a broader sociocultural context, making it clearer why the study's focus on teachers is essential. By understanding the linguistic and cultural interplay in Dearborn, I can better illustrate why teachers must develop critical awareness around multilingualism (García, 2017), and how their instructional practices are deeply influenced by the Third Space in which they work (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008). This use of Third Space, therefore, sets a foundational tone for this study

and highlights the need for teachers to adopt practices that support the linguistic diversity present within both the community and the school system. Thus, while this study does not use Third Space in the analysis, framing the context of the study through this lens helps articulate the complex environment in which this research is situated, providing essential background that deepens the understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics that teachers in Dearborn navigate (Gutiérrez, 2008; Hornberger & McKay, 2010).

Translanguaging

Translanguaging (originally in Welsh, “trawsiethu”) was first introduced by Cen Williams to describe a pedagogical strategy where students alternate between languages for input and output to support their learning (Williams, 1994). Since then, the term was translated into English (Baker, 2001) and has evolved into a broader theoretical framework that moves away from traditional views of languages as separate, bounded systems; instead, it emphasizes the unified nature of a speaker’s linguistic repertoire. It recognizes that multilingual learners naturally draw on multiple languages in speaking, writing, reading, and thinking across contexts and purposes. In education, it serves as both a reflection of real-world multilingual practices and a pedagogical tool to foster equity, inclusion, and deeper learning by allowing students to process information and express ideas using their full linguistic capabilities (García, 2009).

Translanguaging empowers students to utilize their diverse linguistic resources for communication and learning (Daniel & Pacheco, 2015; Vogel & García, 2017). It involves a form of communication that blurs the lines between multiple languages, giving rise to a distinct language system unique to each individual (Kleyn & García, 2019). Yet, as Canagarajah (2013) observes, communication goes beyond words, it entails the “alignment” of words with other symbolic tools, such as icons and images, diverse modes of communication (aural, oral, visual,

tactile), and the social and material contexts within which it occurs (2013, p. 1). Translanguaging is not confined within the boundaries of “language.” Instead, it aligns itself with “linguaging,” which accurately captures the nature of communication that both shapes and is shaped by its context (Anzaldúa 1987; Becker, 1988; García & Wei, 2014). While translanguaging spans beyond verbal or written language, encompassing gestures, images, and other semiotic resources, this study narrows its focus to the linguistic dimensions of translanguaging.

Consequently, translanguaging confronts the challenges stemming from the labeling of students as possessing “limited English proficiency” or developing multiple languages in settings that often favor a monolingual, English-only approach (Seltzer, 2019). The adoption of translanguaging strategies has been recognized for fostering student growth and learning (Nuñez et al., 2020; Rowe & Miller, 2015; Seltzer, 2019). Abourehab & Azaz’s (2023) study of students in a community/heritage language school shows how pedagogical translanguaging can help students view their home languages/dialects as legitimate in relation to the languages/dialects offered in their schooling. Their findings illustrate that pedagogical translanguaging can thrive most in spaces where students have many opportunities to reflect on their identities and construct knowledge (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023). It is through educators’ intentional use of translanguaging pedagogies that students can not only embrace their full linguistic repertoires but also grow as diverse speakers of multiple languages (García, 2017). In essence, translanguaging pedagogy can be analyzed through its three components of educational practices as described by García et al. (2016). These components consist of (1) *stance*, “the teacher’s core beliefs that a bilingual student has one language system with features that need to be leveraged together/juntos,” (2) *design*, which involves intentionally incorporating translanguaging into

classroom instruction and activities., and (3) *shifts*, wherein teachers adapt and respond to their students' changing needs and interests over time (2016, p. 183, 116).

Each of these components has been referenced in academic literature when discussing the support for multilingual students in their educational journeys. Researchers have highlighted how teachers having a pedagogical translinguaging *stance* may better recognize the ways students use their dynamic linguistic repertoire as a resource in school (Espinosa & Asenzi-Moreno, 2021; Pontier, 2022). The *stances* developed among these teachers can shape subsequent *designs* and *shifts*. Pontier (2022) emphasizes the importance of effective teaching and learning, especially when teachers receive support to influence their translinguaging pedagogy *stance*. The *designs* prompted by these *stances* is evident in Dover and Rodríguez-Valls' work with teachers in California, where they advocate for "radically inclusive teaching" through their "Language Explorers" program (2022). They encourage students to embrace their multilingualism in their learning. In the students' writing, teachers use their multilingualism to track the development of their skills (e.g. indicating "metalinguistic awareness"; 2022, p. 116). Similarly, *shifts* in teaching methods have been observed to support students' academic success. For instance, in Rowe and Miller's (2015) study of young emergent bilinguals, students utilized electronic devices to create dual-language products. This study revealed that students could effectively express their ideas using electronic tools, leveraging their multilingual skills in multimodal ways (Rowe & Miller, 2015). Taken together, translinguaging pedagogy is manifested in various ways, including teachers' valuing students' multilingualism, students incorporating multiple languages in their writing, and the integration of multimodality for multilingual projects (Ponzio & Deroo, 2021). These experiences, both implicit and explicit, encourage students to reflect on their linguistic diversity concerning their self-identity, goals, and relationships with others.

It is essential to understand that translanguaging pedagogies goes beyond just instructional techniques and perspectives; they represent a deeper critical stance on how language functions in society, particularly in schools. García (2017) argues that translanguaging must be used thoughtfully by teachers to truly support students' multilingualism. If not critically approached, translanguaging can be misinterpreted or misused as code-switching or translation practices, which reinforce the idea that languages operate in isolation from each other.

Translanguaging involves use of an individual's full linguistic repertoire, transcending the boundaries of named languages to foster deeper learning and affirm linguistic identities (García, 2009; Kleyne & García, 2019). Unlike code-switching, which alternates between two or more languages as separate systems depending on the social or situational factors (Haugen, 1953), translanguaging treats these linguistic resources as a unified system. In contrast, translation focuses on rendering meaning equivalently across languages, often treating them as distinct and fixed entities, which can sometime overlook the cultural nuances inherent in multilingual communication (García et al., 2020). While code-switching and translation often operate within the boundaries of named languages, translanguaging emphasizes fluidity, creating opportunities for educators to design equitable practices that validate and leverage the linguistic and cultural resources of multilingual students (García & Wei, 2014). These distinctions underscore the pedagogical potential of translanguaging in fostering inclusive classrooms that support multilingualism beyond conventional language boundaries. Translanguaging closely aligns with the principles of Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA; García, 2017), a framework discussed in the next section that critiques dominant monolingual ideologies and centers on fostering educators' and students' critical understanding of linguistic diversity. CMLA, like translanguaging, encouraging teachers to not only recognize the multifaceted nature of students'

linguistic repertoires but also to interrogate systemic power dynamics that marginalize certain languages and language practices.

Critical Multilingual Awareness

In a school district such as the Dearborn Public Schools, where half the city's population is Arab American (United States Census Bureau, 2023), multilingualism is central to conversations among educators, administrators, and parents. Oftentimes, in these settings with high numbers of immigrant and refugee background students, prevailing trends in education and views of success are related to students' ability to access and navigate English both socially and academically. García (2017) addresses these views and proposes the framework of Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA), in which there is an understanding that language, specifically languages of the oppressor, have been naturalized across society and replicated in schools. In understanding CMLA, educators are not particularly focused on the languages used in the classroom, but the students who are the speakers of these languages. At the core, the speakers of the languages in the classroom are valued as a part of defining what their schooling environment looks like and sounds like rather than an additional layer to the existing school foundation. This is possible through the shift toward CMLA, which encourages teachers to (1) be aware and supportive of their multilingual students, (2) engage with the histories of oppression, and (3) understand how language use has been normalized in society (García, 2017).

This framework is especially significant in addressing the realities of teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms, particularly given that approximately 80 percent of teachers in the United States are white (Pew Research Center, 2021; Taie & Lewis, 2022). While no federal data source explicitly measure teachers' language use, teacher education research widely acknowledges that most of these teachers are monolingual English speakers (Lucas & Villegas,

2011; Ponzio & Deroo, 2021; Prasad & Heidt, 2023). CMLA can provide support for educators who often feel unequipped when they do not speak the languages their students speak beyond English (de Jong & Gao, 2022). Specifically, given the distribution of multilingual and multicultural students in classrooms with predominantly white monolingual educators, students' cultural and linguistic needs default to obstacles in the classroom (de Jong, 2013). This suggests a need for educators to look beyond cultural and linguistic diversity as “needs,” and instead, to consider them as assets (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Scholars note that teachers aren't comfortable with their students speaking another language in their classrooms because they themselves do not understand what their students are saying (de Jong, 2013; Lucas & Villegas, 2011).

This discomfort is rooted in power dynamics between teachers and their students, echoing Freire's description of the “banking” model (2000), where the teacher is depositing knowledge to their students, who are seen as passive objects taking in information and lacking critical thinking. Conversely, Freire's “problem posing” education model, where students themselves are active participants and co-creators of knowledge (2000), complements principles of CMLA (García, 2017), encouraging teachers and students in a mutual exchange of knowledge, where the students' linguistic repertoire is viewed as integral to learning, not as something to be “managed” or “limited” to English-only communication (García, 2017; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). This model recognizes students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), a framework that recognizes the rich resources students bring from their home and communities into their schooling experiences. By engaging in an asset-based approach (González et al., 2005), teachers are valuing students' cultural and linguistic diversity in their social and academic growth in the classroom. In this view, CMLA encourages teachers to rethink the affordances they make in their

instruction, building with students' linguistic resources rather than imposing strict limitations through narrow views of language use such as more commonly used practices of code-switching (Haugen, 1953) and translations (García et al., 2020).

Teachers who engage with CMLA are challenged to see language use not just as a strategy, but as tied to power dynamics, identity formation, and social equity (García, 2017). When teachers critically implement translanguaging practices, they view students' languages as interconnected and part of their full linguistic repertoire, rather than separating languages into fixed categories (García et al., 2021). This requires moving beyond buzzwords and into a genuine recognition of the linguistic fluidity that students bring into the classroom. For instance, translanguaging allows students to use all their language skills to make meaning, participate, and engage critically in their learning, reflecting their roles as democratic citizens in the classroom and beyond (García, 2009; 2017). However, without a deep understanding of CMLA, teachers may fall into the trap of treating translanguaging as merely switching between languages or translating words, which can limit its transformative potential. As García (2017) asserts, the purpose of translanguaging is to challenge hegemonic language ideologies and empower multilingual students by validating their linguistic identities as part of the learning process. Therefore, in preparing teachers to support multilingual students, it is not enough to introduce terms like translanguaging; educators must be trained to adopt critical perspectives on language use, recognizing the systemic inequalities that shape language hierarchies in schools (Lucas, 2011; Paris, 2012). This is where frameworks like Lucas and Villegas' (2013) guide for linguistically responsive teaching and Freire's problem-posing education (2000) come into play—they provide a foundation for teachers to not only adapt their practices but also to understand and challenge the power structures that affect multilingual learners.

Literature Review

Multilingual Learners in Mainstream U.S. Classrooms

In educational literature that centers U.S. public schooling, multilingual learners are considered under many different labels. Examples already seen across the literature in this study include, Rowe and Miller (2015) using the term “emergent bilinguals” in their study, García and Wei (2014) making the decision to use “bilingual” as an umbrella term to match the common usage of “bilingual education,” Daniel and Pacheco (2015) choosing “multilingual students” to describe the four multilingual teens in their study, and the SIOP model (Echevarría et al., 2004) geared towards “English Learners (ELs).” These are just a few labels of the many that are expanded on in the next section when explicitly discussing Arabic-speaking students (the label chosen for this study). Across mainstream U.S. classrooms, multilingual learners experience challenges fully embracing their multilingual identities due to English proficiency requirements and standardized testing (Michigan Department of Education [MDE], 2020). To address these challenges, frameworks such as linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; 2013) and translanguaging (García, 2009), and CMLA (García, 2017) have been widely researched within educational literature across grade bands and content areas. Researchers have studied the demographics of multilingual learners in U.S. classrooms, findings that show these learners make up about one-fourth of student populations in U.S. public schools, and within this fraction of the population, one-half are ELs (Gándara, 2016). As noted in the introduction, with a majority of these multilingual learners coming from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, a majority of this subsection of research has centered on these students (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022; García, 2009; Palmer & Martinez, 2013), with findings paving the way for mainstream U.S. classrooms to more likely embrace multilingual practices.

Specifically, in understanding educators' perspectives and beliefs on multilingual education in typically monolingual spaces, researchers have, like this present study, applied pedagogical translanguaging *stance* as a theoretical and/or analytical tool (de Jong & Gao, 2023; Deroo & Ponzio, 2019; Pontier, 2022). In doing so, not only are multilingual learners being researched, but so are their current and future educators. Thus, prompting studies that leverage teacher preparation programs as sites of development for linguistically inclusive teachers (Lucas & Villegas, 2010; 2013). The expansive list of educational research that has focused on multilingual learners, specifically in U.S. public schooling, has overlapped with a multitude of branches within education. These include but are not limited to, multimodality to support multilingual learners (Cárdenas Curiel & Ponzio, 2021; Nuñez, 2019), the shaping of classroom power dynamics (García, 2017), and spanning across all content areas (Maldonado Rodríguez & Krause, 2020; Ramirez & Jaffee, 2021). Subsequently, research surrounding multilingual learners in the U.S. has been so popular among recent educational literature, numerous instructional protocols have been developed in response, such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol observed in this study (Echevarría et al., 2004). In exploring how multilingual learners have been supported in U.S. mainstream classrooms, this study on Arabic-speaking students in a U.S. public school district continues the trend of branching multilingual research into unique, and sometimes, personally driven¹ niches in education.

Arabic-Speaking Students in Educational Literature

To fully understand the dynamics of how teachers can best support their Arabic-speaking students, it is crucial to first explore the characteristics, challenges, and cultural contexts of the

¹ See author's positionality statement in Methodology (Chapter Three).

students themselves. Teachers are the mediators between the educational system and their students, and their instructional practices are deeply influenced by the linguistic, cultural, and social needs of their students. Thus, by examining the many experiences of Arabic-speaking students, such as Abourehab and Azaz's study on pedagogical translanguaging which explores the use of translanguaging practices in a community-based Arabic language school in the United States (2023), we can better contextualize the work of teachers and understand how they can adopt intentional practices for multilingual and culturally responsive teaching.

Across the literature on Arabic-speaking students in the U.S., there is a noticeable pattern and shift in how scholars define and describe these students, particularly in relation to their language and cultural identity. In earlier studies, such as those by Akasha (2013) and Palmer et al. (2007), students are primarily identified as Arabic-speaking ESL students or ELLs (English Language Learners). This reflects a strong focus on the English language learning process, with less attention to the cultural or linguistic diversity of the students outside of their English proficiency status. The emphasis here is primarily on their role as learners within the context of English, with "ELL" and "ESL" being functional identifiers tied directly to educational structures.

Meanwhile, more recent studies, such as Sierschynski and Louie (2020), continue this trend by using the term "Arabic-speaking English learners". However, this newer usage acknowledges students' Arabic linguistic background, indicating a shift toward recognizing multilingualism rather than just the students' position as learners of English. This is part of a broader move in the field to recognize students' existing language resources, as seen in discussions around translanguaging and heritage language education. The shift becomes more pronounced when considering scholars like Sehlaoui (2008) and Bale (2010), who refer to these

students as “heritage language speakers”. This terminology emphasizes the students’ relationship with their home language and cultural heritage, recognizing the importance of Arabic beyond its function as a steppingstone to English. This change reflects a growing recognition of students’ linguistic backgrounds as assets and their cultural ties as integral to their educational experiences, aligning with broader trends in culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Lastly, a further evolution is seen in studies like Al-Hazza and Bucher (2008) and Abu El-Haj (2006), where students are described as “Arab” or “Arab American”. These identifiers prioritize cultural and ethnic identity over linguistic labels, reflecting a deeper engagement with the students’ sociocultural positioning within the U.S. This shift in focus from language learning to cultural identity aligns with recent moves in education toward equity and inclusion, where the whole student—including their ethnic identity—is acknowledged as part of the learning environment.

Over time, the literature shows a shift from defining Arabic-speaking students strictly in terms of language acquisition (ELL/ESL) to embracing their broader heritage, linguistic, and cultural identities. This trend toward recognizing students as multilingual and cultural individuals, rather than just learners of English, reflects a more asset-based perspective in education, moving away from deficit-oriented terms like ELL/ESL. It also aligns with contemporary frameworks like Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017), which emphasize the importance of understanding and supporting students’ full linguistic and cultural identities within education. The use of terms like SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) and Arab American further reflects a growing awareness of the need to avoid colonial or reductive geographic labels, instead favoring terminology that reflects students’ self-identification and linguistic practices. This shift in literature mirrors the ongoing conversation in education about the role of multilingualism and identity in shaping students’ experiences, both in and out of the

classroom. In this study, I align with this growing trend of using “Arabic-speaking students” (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2019) to capture both the linguistic diversity and cultural specificity of these students in the Dearborn Public Schools, recognizing that their multilingual and cultural identities are integral to their educational experiences.

The existing literature on Arabic-speaking students in the U.S. continues to expand and provides critical insights into their educational, linguistic, and cultural experiences. The studies in this field demonstrate a growing interest in addressing the needs of this student population, with more work being published in recent years. This momentum is crucial, especially given the increasing numbers of Arabic-speaking students in U.S. schools due to global migration and resettlement, which necessitates more linguistically and culturally inclusive educational practices. The literature highlights a wide range of educational research literature across different subject areas. For example, Najjar et al. (2019) use a psychological lens to qualitatively study the identity development of Arab heritage students in U.S. schools through focus groups of post-secondary Arab American students. The findings of the study suggest that Arab heritage youth face challenges in schools related to identity development and cultural identity, and there is a need for culturally responsive support and interventions in schools (Najjar et al., 2019). With similar implications of navigating complex and sometimes conflicting identities in the United States, Mango’s (2012) qualitative study through narrative inquiry explores the ways in which Arab American women negotiate their identities, particularly in relation to their cultural and religious backgrounds, and how these negotiations are influenced by their experiences in the United States.

Moreover, Abu El-Haj (2006), whose research takes a political focus in creating educational environments that support democratic participation and engagement among all

students regardless of their backgrounds and identities, considers the need for and implications of teaching for social justice among Arab immigrant and Arab American students in the United States. Also encouraging student-centered engagement, Moore and Schleppegrell (2019) pay close attention to language during reading and writing activities in a science class of upper elementary Arabic-speaking students and underscore the significance of valuing the role of language in students using their own voices during learning. Lastly, while Moosa et al. (2001) is one of the only articles in an educational research journal that explored parental involvement among Arabic-speaking students, and they qualitatively examine Arab parental involvement with their elementary children through teacher interviews and make suggestions for the district to support parents' increased involvement in their children's education. Each of these studies emphasize the broad scope of needs for Arabic-speaking students in U.S. contexts (Al Khateeb et al., 2014; Gultekin & May, 2020).

The studies discussed in this literature review reflect diverse methodologies and approaches, ranging from ethnographic work to quantitative analyses, and they emphasize the multifaceted nature of Arabic-speaking students' experiences. For example, Sarroub's (2001) ethnographic portrait of Yemeni American high school girls, specifically focused on their experiences with language and cultural adaptation (which was later published into a book in 2005; Sarroub, 2005). The studies provide a valuable lens into the field of language practices for Arabic-speaking students in the U.S, which was presented across various methodologies of educational research. For instance, Bale (2010), using existing data from various sources to provide a quantitative analysis of the status of Arabic as a heritage language in the U.S., describes the need for more support for Arabic-speaking students in U.S. educational contexts, including the development of Arabic language programs and resources. With similar

implications of the importance of heritage language and supporting language development, Sehlaoui's (2008) autoethnographic approach to understanding Arabic amongst heritage language learners in the U.S takes a deeper look into the dialogue surrounding language learning and maintenance. Through a case study of two U.S. middle school students, Akasha (2013) explored the challenges Arabic-speaking ESL students and their teachers face and provides suggestions for overcoming these challenges. In another case study, Pacheco et al. (2019) explicitly situate translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013; García, 2009) alongside Arabic-speaking students in U.S. schools through an exploration of the translingual practices that occur between third grade students in small reading groups with Arabic, Spanish, and English resources provided. Both case studies (Akasha, 2013; Pacheco et al., 2019), highlight the need for more linguistically and culturally inclusive practices for students in the education system as well as resources for teachers to be able to incorporate these experiences for students in the classroom.

Of all the educational platforms explored, *The Reading Teacher*, a widely read practitioner educational journal for students ages birth through 12 years old, had the highest presence of Arabic-speaking students in articles, although with varied representation. A few articles were highlighted as mentioning "Arab" students (Monobe et al., 2017; Sharma & Christ, 2017), but when reading them the only presence of the Arab identity is the suggestion of using award lists in finding texts that are relevant to the backgrounds of multilingual students (i.e. Arab American Book Award). One article focused on an Arab student who experienced schooling in Iraq and Saudi Arabia before coming to the United States (Sharma & Christ, 2017). The findings of the article suggest that culturally relevant texts can enhance students' motivation and engagement in reading, as well as their academic achievement and cultural competence. There

were two specific examples with primary focuses on Arabic-speaking students in the U.S. (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008; Palmer et al., 2007). While one focused on a case study of an Arabic-speaking student and discussed the challenges of learning English when the home language is Arabic (Palmer et al., 2007), the other engaged in a thorough conversation of developing and embracing an Arab American identity through children's literature with similar findings to Sharma and Christ's (2017) article (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008). Finally, in a recent case study, Sierschynski and Louie (2020) implement a community-centered approach by interviewing Arab mothers to gain their perspectives of books and reading experiences that can best serve Arab students in English language learning.

Outside of academic journals, theses and dissertations have made significant contributions to the discussion of Arabic-speaking students, particularly in Dearborn, Michigan. For example, Elgammal's (1993) dissertation conducted surveys and interviews of community and district educators, which focused on parental attitudes of Arabic-English bilingual programs in Dearborn, Michigan. Similarly, Harp (1998) writes about the perceptions of Arab American parents in Dearborn, Michigan regarding multicultural education for their children. Bazzi-Gates' (2015) mixed-methods dissertation continues the trend of parental involvement in their children's schooling in Dearborn, Michigan through a study of resources and barriers that have contributed to the varying degrees of parental involvement. As shown through these examples, many of these theses and dissertations focus on the Dearborn community given the high number of Arab Americans who live there. The findings from these studies highlight the importance of parental involvement, factors that impact parental involvement, and supporting students cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their schooling. Additionally, Ayouby (2004) uses a case study methodology to examine how language policies, power structures, and social attitudes towards

Arabic-speaking students impact their educational experiences in the United States. Meanwhile, Mansour's (2000) thesis considered a psychological lens through a correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem of Arab American Muslim students in Dearborn, Michigan, suggesting that ethnic identity is positively related to self-esteem among Arab American Muslim adolescents. As shown by the high number of dissertations and theses with this focus on the Dearborn community, the academic conversations surrounding this space are finding their ways into mainstream educational research journals. For example, in Rashid Ghazi's (2011) documentary, *Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football*, the topic of schooling, culture, and faith in Dearborn is brought into research literature through Ingle's (2014) article that situates the Arab American Muslim identities alongside high school football.

By discussing the characteristics and needs of Arabic-speaking students, research can also highlight the necessity for teachers to be trained in Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017), translanguaging pedagogy (García, 2009; García et al., 2016), and culturally sustaining teaching (Paris, 2012). The interaction between student identity and teacher practices is central to creating an equitable learning environment. Without a clear understanding of the students' backgrounds, teachers may inadvertently perpetuate deficit-based perspectives and practices, as highlighted in studies like Bale (2010) and Sehlaoui (2008), which emphasize the importance of maintaining heritage languages while navigating English language acquisition. By framing the discussion around the needs of Arabic-speaking students, this study examines how teachers can be better equipped to address these needs. This provides a holistic understanding of the educational challenges these students face, and how teachers play a key role in supporting their linguistic and academic success.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)

While the Dearborn Public Schools do not offer bilingual programs, they encourage, and sometimes, require professional development experiences for educators to support their high numbers of Arabic-speaking students. Beyond ESL/bilingual endorsements for teachers and Arabic foreign language classes for students, the district has implemented the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP; Echevarría et al., 2004). Instructional protocols like SIOP aim to support English Learners in U.S. classrooms through “sheltered instruction,” providing specific guidance for teachers in typically English-only environments. SIOP consists of eight instructional categories: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interactions, practice/application, and review/assessment.

To briefly go over each category, lesson preparation focuses on setting clear objectives and aligning both language and content goals to make lessons accessible. Second, building background knowledge emphasizes linking students’ prior experiences to new content to help make concepts relatable. Third, comprehensible input encourages the use of various accommodation techniques to make instruction understandable for students with varying levels of English proficiency. Fourth, strategies include modeling, scaffolding, and higher-order questioning to promote critical thinking and language development. Fifth, interaction prioritizes structured opportunities for meaningful communication through discussions, groupwork, and collaborative tasks. Sixth, practice and application provide students with hands-on opportunities to apply their learning in authentic contexts. Seventh, lesson delivery stresses maintaining appropriate pacing and sustaining student engagement throughout instruction. Lastly, review and assessment focus on continuously checking for understanding and helping students consolidate their learning. While these categories are intended to enhance instruction for multilingual

learners, they can sometimes function as a rigid checklist, constraining teacher creativity and limiting students' agency. Teachers may feel pressured to follow the protocol prescriptively rather than adapting it to the diverse and dynamic needs of their students, reinforcing perspectives that view multilingual learners through the lens of their perceived deficits rather than as holders of linguistic and cultural assets (Crawford & Reyes, 2015).

With the increasing number of multilingual students in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2021), there is a focus on instructional methods like SIOP, but its effectiveness is debated. Studies like Bertram's (2011) have encouraged the adoption of SIOP and related strategies, while acknowledging the complexities of diverse multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Yet, it is worth noting that Krashen (2013) has pointed out biases in many studies on SIOP's effectiveness, often conducted by its developers or promoters and yielding weak results. Some studies found no significant change in student performance with SIOP (Vidot, 2011; Williams, 2011), while others suggest effectiveness is linked to comprehensive teacher training (Portillo, 2015; Soto-Huertas, 2018). Conceptually, SIOP's focus on English language proficiency raises concerns. It may hinder multilingual students' growth by emphasizing academic success through English proficiency, overlooking their broader needs (Aukerman, 2007; Cummins, 2017). Offered across many U.S. school districts to support multilingual learners, SIOP provides strategies aimed at helping educators address the needs of linguistically diverse students. However, its framework often reinforces deficit perspectives by framing multilingual students—whether or not they are classified as English Learners—as lacking knowledge or skills due to their linguistic backgrounds (Cummins, 2017). In this study of educators in the Dearborn Public Schools, I focus on classroom teachers' interactions with multilingual Arabic-speaking students in mainstream English Language Arts classes, where

SIOP is required by the district. While intended to support multilingual learners, these approaches may inadvertently position students' linguistic diversity as a challenge rather than an asset.

In their article, Lee and Oxelson (2006) explore how white, monolingual teachers perceive their role in maintaining students' home languages. The study found that many teachers felt unprepared and uninterested in supporting multilingual students' heritage languages, highlighting the need for better teacher training and a shift in attitudes. With the challenges white, monolingual teachers face in engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse students, Sleeter (2008) emphasizes the importance of preparing these teachers to navigate multilingual classrooms through culturally responsive pedagogy and the recognition of linguistic diversity as an asset, rather than a barrier. While frameworks like SIOP aim to address these challenges by providing instructional strategies for multilingual students, they are limited in their approach. SIOP primarily focuses on scaffolding content and language in English-only environments, which may inadvertently marginalize students' home languages and reinforce deficit perspectives. This contrasts with frameworks like Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017), which prioritize recognizing and challenging power dynamics and systemic inequities surrounding language use in schools. CMLA urges teachers to see multilingualism as a resource and to actively disrupt practices that privilege English over students' home languages. Unlike SIOP, CMLA encourages reflective practice and critical engagement with how language shapes identity, power, and access in educational settings.

Especially with traditional teaching methods often reinforcing English-only practices in the classroom, Deroo and Ponzio (2023) explore how pre-service teachers can confront and deconstruct this normalization of a dominant language through multimodal compositions—using

various forms of media such as visual, audio, and digital tools. By utilizing multimodal compositions, pre-service teachers are encouraged to think critically about these language ideologies and reflect on their own biases and assumptions regarding language use in classrooms. Similar to the goals of this study, Deroo and Ponzio offer practical tools to support linguistically responsive teaching (2023). In promoting linguistically responsive teaching, Lucas and Villegas (2011; 2013) are often cited for their comprehensive framework designed to prepare pre-service teachers to effectively engage with multilingual students. They build on Feiman-Nemser's (2001) central tasks for learning to teach, which include recognizing the diverse linguistic needs of students and understanding how to adapt instruction to better support multilingual learners. Lucas and Villegas argue that to foster linguistically responsive teaching, pre-service teachers must develop skills in sociolinguistic awareness (understanding how language and power intersect), pedagogical adaptations (adapting their instruction to meet the needs of their students), and advocacy for their multilingual students as speakers of their own unique set of languages (2013). This emphasis aligns with translanguaging, which positions students as co-constructors of knowledge, allowing them to draw on their home languages and cultural experiences in meaningful ways.

In contrast, SIOP's structured focus on delivering content in English may constrain such fluid use of language, limiting opportunities for students to assert their linguistic agency and for teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their students' linguistic strengths. Lucas and Villegas' (2013) approaches align with CMLA and translanguaging by emphasizing the need to see students' linguistic diversity as a source of strength and a foundation for equitable learning environments. While SIOP provides a structured framework for supporting multilingual learners, its English-centric design and prescriptive nature can limit teachers' ability to recognize and

leverage the rich linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom. CMLA and translanguaging, on the other hand, provide more transformative frameworks that address the broader sociocultural and political dimensions of language, empowering teachers to foster inclusive, linguistically responsive classrooms. These practices not only challenge dominant language ideologies, but also help teachers and students co-create spaces where multilingualism is valued as a necessary part of the learning process.

The ELA Classroom and Beyond

There is significant importance in studying language use and social dynamics in broader community across Dearborn, Michigan, such as school hallways, restaurants, community events, grocery stores, and clinics. In this creation of a Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), students and their families interact, bringing their multilingual identities to the forefront, and engaging in everyday conversations that reflect their cultural and linguistic practices. These interactions reveal how language operates as a tool of identity, power, and connection in the larger community (Gutiérrez, 2008; Janks, 2010). In social settings like these, multilingualism is vibrant and integral to community life, showing how students exist beyond the classroom and are using language flexibly and fluidly across context. This reinforces the importance of considering how linguistic diversity plays a role in students' identities and how it can either be affirmed or stifled when they step into more structured academic settings like ELA classrooms (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022; Paris, 2012).

This study focuses on ELA classrooms because they are institutional domains where language policies, curricula, and instructional practices shape students' formal language development (Cummins, 2000). It is in these classrooms that students' access to academic success is most clearly tied to their engagement with English, often at the expense of their home

languages (Vogel & García, 2017). By focusing on ELA classrooms, I aim to explore how teachers either facilitate or constrain multilingual and culturally responsive practices in their instruction. This narrowed focus allows for a more in-depth exploration of the institutionalized dynamics of language and power (Gutiérrez, 2008; Janks, 2010), and how educators can bridge the gap between students' linguistic diversity (García & Wei, 2014; Lucas & Villegas, 2013) and the expectations of academic English proficiency (Cummins, 2017).

Dearborn Public Schools adhere to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), making it essential to consider the goals outlined in the CCSS when examining the purpose of an ELA classroom in the context of this study. To summarize, the CCSS for English Language Arts provides a framework for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level to be prepared for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). Middle school standards emphasize developing reading comprehension, writing skills, and critical thinking. For example, in sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade ELA, students are expected to analyze complex texts, write coherent arguments, and engage in discussions. Essentially, the CCSS views ELA classrooms as a space for students to develop skills to translate to other parts of their life, with a vision of “what it means to be a literate person who is prepared for success in the 21st century” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). In the context of this study, understanding how ELA classrooms adhere to and navigate the CCSS while supporting students' multilingualism becomes crucial. In addition to the curricular demands, middle school represents a pivotal stage of early adolescence where students begin to navigate more complex social, emotional, and academic landscapes. They are forming a sense of self while negotiating cultural and linguistic identities, which underscores the importance of creating responsive and inclusive learning environments. By centering this study on the middle school context, I aim to capture the

unique dynamics of this transitional period when students' academic, social, and linguistic identities are in flux. The tension between meeting these standards and embracing student diversity in the classroom highlights the need to explore how teachers use frameworks like Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA; García, 2017), translanguaging (García, 2009), and problem-posing education (Freire, 2000), among other models that release power dynamics in the classroom to encourage more student voice and uptake of their identities in their learning experience.

Moreover, TeachingWorks, an educational resource organization, positions ELA classrooms as places where students (1) understand the fundamentals of the English language (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, phonics), (2) can interpret, analyze, and critically evaluate texts, and (3) engage in academic English in meaningful and many ways (i.e. reading, speaking, and writing) (TeachingWorks, n.d.). Similarly, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in their 2016 position statement on teaching writing, emphasize that writing instruction should foster creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to engage in diverse communication contexts, viewing writing as a vital tool for academic success and personal growth (NCTE, 2016). The NCTE advocates for a comprehensive approach to writing education that allows students to express themselves while meeting academic expectations. By aligning these various definitions of English education, there is an emphasis that ELA classrooms should be places where students' language resources are not only acknowledged but actively integrated into their literacy development, preparing them for broader social engagement. Such engagement ties back to their existing communities and everyday lives in Dearborn and the symbiotic growth that happens both inside and outside of the classroom (García, 2017).

ELA classrooms are the primary sites where students develop their reading, writing, and speaking skills, which are foundational for all other content areas. This makes the ELA classroom a critical environment to observe how language ideologies—especially those privileging English—are enacted or challenged (Seltzer, 2019). In the Dearborn Public Schools, they have recently adopted the Amplify curriculum for their English Language Arts classes across all their schools (Amplify Education, Inc., n.d.). The selection of a curriculum for ELA classrooms significantly influences cultural and linguistic representation through the texts and discussions it promotes, shaping teachers' practices and engagement with broader sociopolitical issues. For multilingual students, this is a space where their linguistic resources should be integrated, but are often marginalized (Aukerman, 2007). Specifically, when considering teachers' pedagogical approaches, ELA classrooms are an ideal context for examining teachers' practices toward multilingualism, as they navigate both academic expectations and the diverse linguistic needs of students (García et al., 2011).

Importantly, literacy is not neutral—literacy education is deeply tied to social power (Janks, 2010). Understanding the broader sociopolitical dimensions of language in ELA classrooms is key to the present study. Hilary Janks' *Literacy and Power* (2010), while not directly about ELA classrooms, echoes Gutiérrez's concept of sociocritical literacy (2008) by emphasizing how literacy skills can be a tool of power, access, and diversity. This is important in an ELA classroom where students engage in texts, language, and discourse that shape their understanding of the world around them (TeachingWorks, n.d.; Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). Especially with perspectives of English as the dominant language in U.S. discourse, ELA classrooms shape students' access to opportunities that are dependent on their strength in English (Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014). By focusing on ELA classrooms, this

study offers practical suggestions for teachers to support multilingual learners in a learning environment where language, literacy, and identity intersect most prominently. This analysis establishes the groundwork for the methodological approach, which examines district educators' perspectives and practices related to multilingual language practices in schooling. The following chapter details the methods used to investigate these perspectives and practices, including the data collection process and frameworks that guided the analysis of this data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the two research questions of this study: (1) What are the beliefs and perceived practices of district educators who work with Arabic-speaking students regarding teaching and learning in multiple languages? (2) How are teachers' beliefs and perceptions about multilingual practices reflected in their classroom practices with Arabic-speaking students? The chapter begins with the overarching research design, explaining why it was chosen to best address the study's objectives. Following, I provide a statement of my positionality in this study. The process of participant selection and standards for quality are then detailed along with participant profiles, which later transitions into data sources used in alignment with the research questions. To address the first research question, district educator interviews and the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) were conducted to capture beliefs and perceived practices. The second research question was examined through classroom observations and observation interviews, incorporating some insights from the district educator interviews to understand how these beliefs and practices translated into classroom practices. More thoroughly, each data source, district educator interviews, classroom observations with interviews, and the MULTITEACH questionnaire, are described and situated within their role of answering the research questions using specific analytical frameworks.

Through an embedded case study (Barone, 2011), the following study is conducted in three parts (district educator interviews, classroom observations with interviews, and the MULTITEACH questionnaire) to address both perceptions and actions of multilingual practices in Dearborn public schooling. According to Scholz and Tietje (2002), an embedded case study consists of multiple units of analysis within a single case study. Instead of focusing solely on the

overarching Dearborn Public Schools in the analysis, an embedded case study design allows for an exploration of the various subunits (i.e. classrooms, schools, district staff) within the broader context of the district. This is especially helpful for this dissertation to investigate perspectives and application of language practices across the district. Drawing on observations across three classrooms in the district, each classroom is studied within its own context, but the findings are collectively tied back to the district in the overall analysis using CMLA (García, 2017) and the three components of translanguaging pedagogy (*stance*, *design*, and *shifts*; García et al., 2016) as analytical frameworks. In all, an embedded case study allows for an in-depth understanding of both the system and its many moving parts (Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

In capturing a full picture of language practices, the aim was to understand not only how they are implemented, but also how they are understood and supported across all levels of the school district, which is why the district educator interviews included more than classroom teachers. This is especially important considering teachers, administrators, and district leaders each play a unique role in shaping educational practices, policies, and culture, particularly around multilingualism. Understanding multilingual perspectives at all levels helps identify gaps, challenges, and support mechanisms needed to create a more cohesive approach that aligns with translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2016) and Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017). While García et al. (2016) describe *design* and *shift* in the context of classroom teaching, these concepts can also apply to the broader school system. For administrators and district leaders, *design* might involve structuring policies, programs, and resources that support translanguaging pedagogies across classrooms, ensuring access to materials in multiple languages, or organizing professional development to promote multilingual practices. *Shift* at this level could reflect responsive adjustments to support teachers' evolving needs, such as adapting

district policies based on teacher feedback or changes in the student population. Therefore, understanding leaders' language perspectives and practices provides a holistic view of how linguistically inclusive frameworks can permeate across the district, rather than being limited to isolated classroom practices.

Positionality

This positionality statement allows for a reflection on the personal and socio-historical contexts that shape my perspective, motivations, and analysis. I was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, just thirty miles from Dearborn, a city deeply interwoven with the Arab American community. My connection to Dearborn extends beyond proximity; it is rooted in my family's lived experiences and cultural identity. My father, displaced from Palestine, spent his early childhood in a refugee camp in Jordan before resettling in Michigan at the age of seven, shaped by the trauma of displacement and the ongoing impacts of the Israeli occupation. My mother, who moved to the United States upon marrying my father, also contributed to my perspective, having navigated the journey of learning English while raising a family within a multicultural and multilingual community.

Many of my formative memories are tied to Dearborn—accompanying my father to his work, attending community events, experiencing the cultural vibrancy of weddings, school functions, and gatherings with family and friends. My educational experiences were also enriched by attending a charter school in Ann Arbor with strong ties to Dearborn, where I interacted regularly with students who, like me, were Arab and Muslim, often from refugee or immigrant backgrounds. This community-centric schooling environment fostered a sense of belonging and a shared linguistic and cultural identity that influenced my personal, academic, and professional journeys. Later, as a teacher in the same school I attended, I witnessed firsthand

how institutional policies and pedagogical choices influenced students' cultural and linguistic identities—sometimes affirming them, but often constraining them. These experiences solidified my research interests in multilingualism and translanguaging, driving me to explore how educators' beliefs and systemic structures shape the inclusion (or exclusion) of students' full linguistic repertoires and backgrounds in the classroom.

While the focal schools for this study were chosen based on responses to the research call I emailed to middle school principals across the district, my direct engagement with the Dearborn Public Schools system began during my graduate studies at Michigan State University. As a research assistant with the Global Educators Cohort Program, a globally focused cohort of students within the teacher preparation program, I helped design and coordinate the itinerary of the annual Dearborn trip as well as volunteered as a trip leader during the actual experience. Through these interactions, I was able to build relationships with local educators and community leaders, even visiting two of the three schools in this study before my dissertation was proposed. These connections revealed the unique dynamics of the Arab community in southeast Michigan, where social and professional networks often intertwine. For example, during interviews with educators for subsequent GECP research, I was frequently asked about my last name, which led to surprising connections with relatives or community members. These interactions underscored the close-knit nature of the community and validated the value of shared cultural bonds in my work.

Growing up multilingual in an English-dominant educational system that frequently privileges English over other languages, I felt the impact of linguistic expectations that often overlook or diminish the cultural and linguistic resources of multilingual students. Witnessing how the Dearborn community operates as a linguistically diverse space that does not privilege

English in informal, everyday contexts—but observing how educational institutions may differ—drives my motivation to examine how language policies and practices within Dearborn Public Schools affect Arabic-speaking students. This dissertation, then, is an inquiry into the educational structures, curricula, and policies that shape the schooling experiences of multilingual students in Dearborn. My goal is not only to understand, but to critically engage with the mechanisms through which district educators in Dearborn support or limit multilingualism. In framing this study, I am mindful of my unique position as someone who has navigated these linguistic landscapes as a student, a teacher, and now a researcher. My approach remains grounded in a deep respect for the strengths of Dearborn’s school system, acknowledging its commitment to educational equity while also examining the potential preference for English-only practices in educational spaces. This work, therefore, is both a personal and professional endeavor, motivated by a commitment to support and enhance the educational experiences of multilingual learners in a way that honors their full linguistic and cultural identities.

I include my positionality in the “Methodology” chapter to demonstrate how my dual perspective as both an insider and outsider within the Dearborn community has shaped each aspect of my research process, influencing how I collect data, interact with participants, and make methodological decisions. My positionality has affected not only the way I spoke with district educators but also my emotional responses to certain choices I made during observations. For instance, my decisions about which questions to emphasize or revise—and even my approach to refining research questions after presenting my proposal to my committee—are grounded in my personal background and connections to this community. This embedded subjectivity has been central to determining how I approach language use within the Dearborn

Public Schools, especially as I focus on educators' roles. My awareness of my own background and potential biases ensures that I remain critically reflective and deliberate about the various ways language dynamics are explored in this study, and it helps me maintain an honest, grounded approach to investigating educators' perspectives and practices. Thus, my positionality is not a separate aspect of my study but rather an integral part of the research design that informs my approach at every step.

Sampling and Standards for Quality

All participants were given consent forms, which included brief details of the study, expectations of participants' time, and assurance of confidentiality. As a token of appreciation for their time and participation in the study, each teacher was given a gift basket valued at no more than \$50. These baskets were in recognition of their contributions to the interviews, observations, and other study-related tasks, such as responding to emails, completing the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020), and speaking with their students about their experiences. Each class was also provided with a small gift basket containing candy and classroom activities, with each basket valued at no more than \$20. In total, tokens of appreciation included a basket for each classroom teacher ($n=3$) and a student basket for each classroom observed ($n=3$).

Data sources are a result of convenience sampling (MacNealy, 1999), in which participants and classrooms were chosen based on accessibility and existing professional connections with the school district. Having previously worked with these schools for teacher educator experiences through Michigan State University, I continued this partnership through this dissertation research. Teachers and classes were included in the study sample based on conversations with educators and administrators at each school. After submitting and receiving

approval for this study through the district's research request process, I contacted principals across all the district middle schools to request access for classroom observations. The response from principals varied: while some expressed interest, others cited concerns such as having too few Arab students, limited teacher interest, or recent staffing changes. In the three schools selected for this study, principals sent out recruitment emails to their staff. Teachers who responded with interest in participating in classroom observations were subsequently included in the study. Because participants were selected through convenience sampling, there is a potential risk of limited representativeness, selection bias, overlapping perspectives, and researcher-participant bias. To address these concerns, individuals in diverse roles (coaches/trainers, specialists, principals, and classroom teachers) were intentionally recruited to capture multiple layers of expertise. The approach also prioritized a context-specific understanding of Dearborn Public Schools, focusing on the district's unique dynamics rather than generalizable conclusions. Acknowledging these limitations underscores the need to interpret the findings within Dearborn's specific educational and socio-cultural environment.

Additionally, triangulation through observations, interviews, and a questionnaire further reduced potential biases. Using multiple sources of evidence through "multiple triangulation" (Yin, 1994; Evers & van Staa, 2010), multiple data triangulations were applied in the data collection and analysis of the study. Methodological and data-type triangulations were present through the use of interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation audiovisual recordings and transcripts, and analytic memos. Data source triangulation because data was collected at different times across interviews (pre-, post-, and during observations), observations (whole-classroom discussions, instructional time), and questionnaires (post-observations). Finally, analysis triangulation facilitated a review of the data in various ways. For the first research question,

district educator interviews were analyzed through a qualitative translanguaging framework, specifically through CMLA (García, 2017) and the *stance* component of translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2016) along with analyzing teacher’s answers to the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020). For the second research question, there was a more in-depth consideration into the translanguaging pedagogy *design* and *shifts* in the classrooms observed to support students’ linguistic identities, needs, and interests and how these *shifts* align with the *stances* previously analyzed in the first part of the analysis.

Participant Profiles

This section outlines all of the district educators who participated in this study. The following table shares brief information of the district educators, including which parts of the data collection they participated in. The subsequent paragraphs go into further details of each of these participants.

Table 1

Participant Roles and Participation in Study

Name	Demographics	Role	Data Sources
Mrs. Haddad	Female, Arab (Yemeni)	Principal	District Educator Interview
Mr. Salim	Male, Arab (Lebanese)	Principal	District Educator Interview
Mrs. Naser	Female, Arab (Palestinian)	SIOP and language/ literacy trainer	District Educator Interview
Mrs. Rahman	Female, Arab (Yemeni)	Language/literacy trainer	District Educator Interview
Mrs. Abbas	Female, Arab (Lebanese)	ELD specialist	District Educator Interview
Mrs. Dania	Female, Arab (Lebanese)	ELA instructional coach	District Educator Interview

Table 1 (cont'd)

Mr. Hall	Male, White	Middle school ELA classroom teacher (seventh grade observed)	District Educator Interview, MULTITEACH Questionnaire, Classroom Observations, Observation Interviews
Mrs. Clark	Female, White	Middle school ELA classroom teacher (eighth grade observed)	District Educator Interview, MULTITEACH Questionnaire, Classroom Observations, Observation Interviews
Mrs. Baker	Female, White	Middle school ELA classroom teacher (sixth grade observed)	District Educator Interview, MULTITEACH Questionnaire, Observations, Observation Interviews

Mrs. Haddad is the principal of Zaatari School. Before becoming a principal, she taught at both the lower elementary and middle school levels. She has spent several years in administration and has been a principal for five years. Mrs. Haddad has also coached sports and is involved in various non-profits. Coming from an Arab Muslim background, she was born and raised in Dearborn, Michigan. Although born in the U.S., she considers Arabic her first language, spoken primarily at home. She mentioned how many Arab families, including her own, moved to Dearborn due to opportunities in the automotive industry.

Mr. Salim is the principal of Zayt School. He has been in education for 24 years, starting as a math teacher and high school coach. After five years as an assistant principal, he became a principal. Education runs in his family—his wife is also a principal in the district, and two of his children are pursuing degrees in education. Mr. Salim comes from a Lebanese Muslim background and was born and raised in Michigan. Although his extended family moved to Dearborn Heights, he continues to live in East Dearborn. Mr. Salim speaks both Arabic and English at home, with English being the dominant language.

Mrs. Naser is one of three SIOP and language/literacy trainers in the district. She works with elementary and middle schools that feed into a specific high school, supporting teachers on best practices for English learners and providing professional development. Though born in the U.S., Mrs. Naser considers Arabic her first language, as she spent the first eight years of her life in Palestine. Since returning to the U.S., English has become her primary language. She grew up in West Dearborn but attended middle school in Canton, Michigan.

Mrs. Rahman is also a language/literacy trainer and performs similar duties as Mrs. Naser. With 23 years in the district, she started as a classroom teacher before transitioning to an ELD specialist and then to a district-level position as a language/literacy trainer, which she has held for 15 years. Mrs. Rahman, born and raised in Dearborn, comes from a Yemeni background. She grew up in a monolingual Arabic household and did not learn English until starting school. While she now primarily speaks English, she still uses Arabic with her parents.

Mrs. Abbas is an ELD specialist at Zayt School and has been in her current role for about 12 years. She works with newcomer students, helping them transition from basic language acquisition to more advanced language skills. Mrs. Abbas speaks both Arabic and English at home, using Arabic with her parents and trying to maintain it with her children, though she often reverts to English. Born in Lebanon, she moved to the U.S. at the age of five and learned English as her second language in the Dearborn Public Schools.

Mrs. Dania is an ELA instructional coach at Zayt School who began as a classroom teacher. She works alongside middle school ELA teachers to support their classroom goals and “best practices.” Additionally, she works at the district level coordinating professional development opportunities in schools across the district. She was a part of the process in choosing a new ELA curriculum for the district, which took a few years (including a pilot year of

the Amplify curriculum). Mrs. Dania was born and raised in Dearborn and was a student in the Dearborn Public Schools. She speaks both English and Arabic, but considers English as her primary language. According to Mrs. Dania, while only one-third of the classroom teachers in Zayt School come from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds, a majority of the support staff and administration come from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

Mr. Hall teaches middle school English Language Arts at Zaatar School, and I am observing his seventh-grade ELA class. He is a white male and primarily speaks English, but also knows some Sinhala. He was born and raised in a city just ten minutes from Dearborn, Michigan. He attended university in Dearborn, but spent 18 years teaching in another state, primarily working with Spanish-speaking students. This is his first year teaching at the Dearborn Public Schools, and he lives in a city 30 minutes away. His wife also teaches in the district, though their children attend school elsewhere. According to Mr. Hall, approximately two-thirds of the middle school staff (including coaches, resource staff, and administration) staff in Zaatar School come from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

Mrs. Clark teaches middle school ELA at Zeitoun School, and I observed her eighth-grade class. This is her sixth year teaching ELA, but her first in Dearborn. Teaching is her second career after spending 20 years in journalism. A white English-speaking teacher, Mrs. Clark has lived in the metro Detroit area her whole life, growing up just 20 minutes from Dearborn. While she speaks mostly English, she knows some “broken Spanish” to support her daughter’s schoolwork. According to Mrs. Clark, approximately three-fifths of the middle school staff (including coaches, resource staff, and administration) staff in Zeitoun School come from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

Mrs. Baker has been in the district for three years and has a total of 18 years of teaching experience. She teaches English Language Arts to both newcomer English learners and mainstream students, and I am observing her sixth-grade ELA class in Zayt School. Mrs. Baker has lived in Dearborn for about 40 years, having attended and taught in private schools in the city before joining the public school system. She speaks only English.

Across the three classrooms observed were students in the “mainstream” ELA classes in their respective grades, sixth, seventh, and eighth. Class sizes ranged from 14-22 students. No interviews or surveys were conducted with the students and all information regarding their demographics are based on information provided by the teachers as well as resources that highlight the overall demographics of the DPS student population which is discussed in the previous chapters. According to information provided by the teachers, a majority of students (over 90 percent) in all three classrooms come from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds. As discussed earlier, because official demographic data continues to classify Arab Americans as “White” (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; United States Census Bureau, 2024), information about Dearborn student and educator identities was informally gathered through district educator accounts.

Data Sources

This study integrates multiple qualitative data sources to investigate how district educators in Dearborn Public Schools perceive multilingualism and how these perceptions are enacted in classroom contexts. By triangulating insights from interviews, classroom observations, and a teacher questionnaire, the research gains a multidimensional understanding of both the broader districtwide perspectives on multilingual education and the day-to-day realities within individual classrooms. Each data source aligns with one or both of the study’s

research questions: (1) educators’ beliefs and perceived practices regarding multilingual instruction with their Arabic-speaking students, and (2) how these beliefs and practices unfold in actual classroom settings. The following table (see **Table 2**) briefly outline all of the data sources with subsequent sections expanding on the details of each data source and how they were analyzed.

Table 2

Summary of Data Sources

Data Source	Participants	Description	RQ Alignment
District Educator Interviews	All district educators listed in the participant profiles (see Table 1)	Semi-structured interviews exploring district-wide policies, beliefs about the role of Arabic in instruction, and broader multilingual practices.	Addresses RQ1 (educators’ beliefs and perceived practices), with reference in RQ2 findings.
Classroom Observations and Teacher Interviews	Three middle school ELA teachers and students in each class	Observations of daily instruction and teacher–student interactions in ELA classrooms, supplemented by check-in interviews that reveal teachers’ rationale for their instructional decisions and language use.	Addresses RQ2 (how beliefs are actualized in classroom practices).
MULTITEACH Questionnaire (Calafato, 2020)	Three middle school ELA teachers	Slightly modified to include “Arabic” in the first section. Captures teachers’ multilingual backgrounds, beliefs about the utility of students’ home languages, and extent of multilingual integration.	Addresses both RQ1 and RQ2 by comparing teachers’ stated beliefs with their observed practices.

District Educator Interviews

To distinguish the interviews conducted at the beginning of the study from those held with classroom teachers during observations, they are referred to as the “district educator interviews.” This labeling clarifies their role as a separate data source within the study. As such, for the district educator interviews, I spoke with nine district educators in the Dearborn Public

Schools. These educators included a SIOP and language/literacy trainer, another language/literacy trainer, an English Language Development (ELD) specialist, an ELA coach, two principals from two of the three schools where observations were conducted, and the three teachers whose classrooms had been observed. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy, including the schools where they work. The only identifying details are their roles and the district they serve. A pseudonym for the specific school district was not used given the context of the city of Dearborn and the significance provided in the previous chapter. All participants were included in the district educator interviews, as this data served as the foundation for analyzing educators' perceptions and beliefs broadly across the school district. However, for subsequent data collection, the focus narrowed to classroom teachers, moving beyond beliefs and perceptions to how they were actualized in classroom practices.

Data collection began with the initial semi-structured interviews with district educators in Dearborn Public Schools with the goal of balancing an open-ended conversation with a structured set of questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). These interviews took place before the classroom observations and included questions about the overarching theme of the first research question on perspectives on the role of Arabic in student instruction. Interviews were held remotely via Zoom, and were recorded audio-visually with automatic transcript generation of our conversations. These transcripts were later reviewed for alignment with CMLA (García, 2017) and translanguaging pedagogy *stance* (García et al., 2016). Both frameworks facilitated a better understanding of district educators' perspectives and beliefs of district language practices. Overall, each interview ranged from 45-75 minutes.

The interview questions for DPS staff were designed to explore the intersection of language, identity, and education within the context of Dearborn Public Schools given its large

Arab American population. Given the focus on multilingualism and translanguaging pedagogy, these questions reflect the layers of cultural and linguistic dynamics that shape educators' practices and beliefs, particularly in a community where Arabic plays a significant role alongside English. While all district educator interviews began with the same set of questions, the semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling participant answers sometimes prompted more specific questions in relation to their roles within the school district. This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of educators' perspectives while maintaining consistency across interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). For example, teachers discussed specific classroom practices, their design of multilingual opportunities, and any responsive shifts they make to adapt to students' needs. In contrast, administrators and trainers/coaches were asked about policies, resources, and support systems for multilingual students and how they align with district goals. They provided insight into the broad framework and systemic goals surrounding multilingualism, including district-wide initiatives, professional development priorities, and potential areas of expansion.

The full interview protocol is provided in **Appendix A**. The first part of the interview, titled "Identity and Community Role," focuses on personal language background and community identity, which is key to understanding how multilingualism functions within the educators' own lives. These questions are directly related to exploring how teachers' language *stance*—their beliefs and personal experiences with languages—shapes their approach in the classroom. By asking about their language use at home, in social settings, and religious contexts, I am drawing connections between their personal multilingualism and how they may (or may not) value multilingualism in their teaching practice. Further, the questions regarding the educators' cultural identity within the Arab community (e.g., "Do you identify as part of the Arab community in the US? In Dearborn?") help establish a socio-cultural context for understanding how their

environment influences their views on language use. This reflects the Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017; CMLA) dimension, as their identification with their community can shape their understanding of language power dynamics in a predominantly English-speaking educational system.

The second part of the interview, titled “Professional Role and District Insights,” shifts toward educators’ professional roles and their views on language practices in the classroom. These questions encouraged a deeper dive into their perceived language design and shifts—how they plan for and adjust language practices in real-time classroom settings. Their perspectives on English-only classrooms and their experiences with language barriers reflect how they navigate between monolingual and multilingual ideologies in education. Their views on differentiation and linguistic diversity reveal whether they engage in translanguaging practices or hold more traditional views of language instruction. By focusing on Arabic language use across content areas, I am also bringing in the Critical Multilingual Awareness framework (García, 2017), assessing whether educators see Arabic as a resource or a barrier within content areas like math, ELA, or science. Their responses provide insight into how deeply they understand and support translanguaging as a pedagogical tool, which is central to this research.

These questions are designed to explore the existing language practices in Dearborn’s classrooms, particularly focusing on how teachers’ beliefs and practices influence the presence (or absence) of Arabic in predominantly English spaces. They align with this study’s goal to explore how translanguaging pedagogy is or isn’t applied in a district with a high concentration of Arabic-speaking students, helping address the gap between teachers’ language stance and classroom practices. Additionally, these questions will help examine how multilingual policies or

lack thereof influence educators' beliefs, fitting into the implications of how educators can be trained to support multilingualism more effectively in real-world educational settings.

Analysis of District Educator Interviews

In analyzing these district educator interviews, I focus on the *stance* component of the translanguaging pedagogy, incorporating elements of Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) to address the first research question: district educators' perspectives on the role of Arabic during instruction. *Stance*, as defined by García et al. (2016), refers to the beliefs and attitudes that educators hold regarding students' multilingual identities and the value of these identities in the learning process. CMLA adds a critical dimension by considering how social, political, and historical factors shape these beliefs, emphasizing how power dynamics and linguistic hierarchies influence educators' stances toward language use in the classroom. In the context of the interviews, I examine how district educators perceive the role of Arabic in Dearborn's classrooms—whether they view it as an asset that enriches student learning or as a barrier to English language acquisition (García, 2017). Incorporating CMLA promotes investigating not just their beliefs about Arabic, but also how these beliefs may be influenced by broader societal narratives, such as the dominance of English in education and the marginalization of minoritized languages like Arabic. This critical lens help uncover how educators' *stances* reflect deeper issues of equity, language rights, and cultural recognition in a historically English-only educational setting.

To analyze the interview data, the Zoom-generated transcriptions were manually coded using a priori codes (see **Table 3**; Saldaña, 2021) derived from the theoretical frameworks guiding this study: CMLA (García, 2017) and translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2016). Codes were analyzed using researcher-defined segments that were not restricted by word,

sentence, or paragraph boundaries, with each segment capturing a single idea that aligned with the study's a priori codes. While each segment was assigned a primary code, some instances reflected multiple themes, allowing for occasional overlap in coding. Specifically for the district educator interviews, CMLA-based codes were: (1) community and identity, (2) cultural and linguistic hierarchies, and (3) language value and use. Translanguaging-based codes were the three components highlighted by García et al. (2016): (1) *stance*, (2) *design*, and (3) *shifts*. This deductive thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) guided the organization of data into categories that capture both personal beliefs and broader socio-political context of language use in Dearborn. Using these codes, the findings of the district educator interviews explored how district educators perceive multilingualism, articulate their understanding of students' linguistic and cultural identities, and interpret the broader societal norms that shape language use within Dearborn schools.

Table 3

List of A Priori Codes Used for Analysis of Data Sources

Code	Derived From	Data Source
Community and Identity	CMLA (García, 2017)	District Educator Interviews
Cultural and Linguistic Hierarchies	CMLA (García, 2017)	District Educator Interviews
Language Value and Use	CMLA (García, 2017)	District Educator Interviews and MULTITEACH Questionnaire
<i>Stance</i>	Translanguaging Pedagogy (García et al., 2016)	District Educator Interviews and MULTITEACH Questionnaire
<i>Design</i>	Translanguaging Pedagogy (García et al., 2016)	Interviews (Initial and Observation) and Classroom Observations
<i>Shifts</i>	Translanguaging Pedagogy (García et al., 2016)	Interviews (Initial and Observation) and Classroom Observations

In all, CMLA provided a framework for examining how educators navigate language hierarchies and whether their beliefs reflect an asset- or deficit-based orientation toward multilingualism. Simultaneously, the *stance* component of translanguaging pedagogy offered insight into how these perspectives manifest in educators' stated commitments—or hesitations—toward fostering multilingual practices. The analysis of district educator interviews focused solely on the *stance* component of translanguaging pedagogy for RQ1. While the *design* and *shifts* components were more directly observable in classroom instruction rather than in interviews, both the *design* and *shifts* codes from the district educator interviews were valuable to the findings of RQ2. *Design* involves the deliberate inclusion of multilingual resources and strategies in classroom activities, while *shifts* reflect teachers' adaptability to students' changing linguistic needs. By initially concentrating on *stance*, this approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of district-wide perspectives and beliefs on language use, establishing a basis for the subsequent analysis of translanguaging pedagogies in classroom observations. Through this approach, the analysis begins to reveal how the district navigates the tensions between promoting linguistic diversity and adhering to monolingual norms, thereby offering insights into the broader implications of language policy and identity in education.

Classroom Observations with Teacher Interviews

To answer the second research question, classroom observations were conducted across three middle school English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, each located at a different school in the district. The three middle school classrooms are comprised of one sixth-grade ELA class, one seventh-grade ELA class, and one eighth-grade ELA class. ELA classrooms were selected for observation because they are central to language development and literacy instruction, making them ideal for examining multilingual practices. More so, while this study focuses on

teachers' language practices in the classroom, middle school as a transitional stage offers insight into how students are shaping their own learning experiences. This part of data collection focuses specifically on whole-class observations, including talk and teacher instruction, to observe the multilingual practices occurring in the classrooms. Each class is taught by one teacher and sometimes include a classroom support staff. Class sizes of the observed classrooms ranged from 14 students (Mr. Hall), 18 students (Mrs. Baker), and 22 students (Mrs. Clark). All participants were given consent forms and students also signed assent beyond their guardian approval to provide permission for participation in the study.

Materials for observations include a Canon Vixia (handheld camcorder) with battery charging cables and memory cards, and a tripod for setting up cameras. These materials were delivered to teachers at the start of observations and retrieved after observations concluded. Beyond the initial in-person support, teachers were given a written guide on how to set up cameras, record videos, and download the videos to a shared storage drive. Observations took place during the Spring 2024 semester, beginning in late January 2024 and ending mid-March 2024. Data was collected through teacher-recorded observations for the duration of a 1.5-2-month period. Observations were approximately one class period length (50 minutes) with total number of observations per classroom (Mr. Hall, $n=3$; Mrs. Baker, $n = 6$; Mrs. Clark $n = 5$) discussed more thoroughly in the following paragraph. Students were re-arranged in groups during classroom observations to avoid students who had not assented to being recorded.

Classroom observations with Mr. Hall began with the district educator interview, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Throughout the observations, the goal was to conduct check-in interviews with the teachers at the start, midway, and at the end of the observation period. Before meeting with the teachers, observation videos they had uploaded to storage drive

were reviewed, allowing for specific questions based on classroom observations. These interviews were fully unstructured, centered around the classroom observations, and emerging questions from both the teachers and I, depending on the direction of the conversation. Unlike the district educator interviews, these sessions did not follow a predetermined set of questions. The interviews were shaped by questions on the teachers' instructional *designs* and adaptive *shifts* in their teaching, examining how their *stances* influenced not only what they aspired to do in supporting multilingual students but also their actual decisions in practice and their future intentions. Specifically, for Mr. Hall, he completed three observations, and followed by a second interview after the third observation. With Mrs. Baker, she completed six observations, with a total of four interviews: the district educator interview, one interview after the second observation, another after the fourth observation, and a final interview after all observations were completed. With Mrs. Clark, she completed five observations, with a total of four interviews: the district educator interview, one interview after the second observation, another after the fourth observation, and a final interview after all observations were completed. Once all observations were completed, classroom visits were conducted to collect the materials provided to the teachers for data collection.

Analysis of Classroom Observations with Teacher Interviews

The observations across three classrooms within the school district offered insight into language practices in U.S. public English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms where the majority of students in these classrooms come from Arabic-speaking backgrounds, while all teachers in these settings are white and self-identified as monolingual. Using audio-visual recordings of these classroom sessions, observations were initially transcribed through the REV software, where each transcript was then carefully reviewed for accuracy. Following transcription, the data

was imported into a qualitative analysis software, which supported the process of a priori coding and categorizing classroom interactions (Saldaña, 2021). The codes for analyzing these interactions were derived from pedagogy *design* and *shifts* (García et al., 2016; see **Table 3**).

Transitioning from the first research question to the second, Calafato's MULTITEACH questionnaire (2020), designed to assess teacher attitudes and practices regarding multilingual education, provided a foundational understanding of how each teacher perceived their role in supporting multilingualism. Nonetheless, it was García et al.'s (2016) latter two components of translanguaging pedagogy (*design* and *shifts*) that provided the categories of analysis to assess how teachers might, intentionally or unintentionally, incorporate these elements into their teaching. These two components were prioritized for observation-based analysis because they offer the clearest evidence of teachers' real-time pedagogical decisions. While *stance* was better identified through interviews regarding educators' beliefs in the first research question, *design* and *shifts*, manifest during instruction, demonstrating whether (and how) translanguaging pedagogies are enacted in everyday practice (RQ2).

The classroom observations were analyzed in conjunction with teacher observation interviews, district educator interviews, and each teacher's responses to the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020). By triangulating classroom data with educator perspectives and self-reported practices, this analysis aimed to explore how observed language practices aligned or diverged from (1) the perspectives of district educators across the school district, and (2) the teachers' own beliefs and perceptions regarding multilingualism in their classrooms. This layered analysis highlights the role of teachers as potential gatekeepers of language use in monolingual-dominant contexts. In line with CMLA (García, 2017), it interrogates the implicit language ideologies that might influence their pedagogical choices and their willingness or resistance to

adapt classroom practices to support multilingualism. Integrating the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) allowed for nuanced insight into each teacher's *stance* on multilingual education and provided a comparative lens to evaluate whether their classroom language practices reflected these beliefs, as outlined in García et al.'s (2016) translanguaging pedagogy.

MULTITEACH Questionnaire

At the conclusion of classroom observations, a questionnaire was provided to the teachers in the observed classrooms. The questionnaire being used was a slightly modified form of Calafato's (2020) MULTITEACH questionnaire (see **Appendix B**), in which the only change made was the addition of "Arabic" (Section 2, Question 7: languages currently teaching). This minor change was necessary given the high volume of Arabic-speakers in the school district educators are performing in, even though all the educators being observed were in English Language Arts classrooms. The MULTITEACH questionnaire was provided as an electronic document for teachers to fill out. The questionnaire takes approximately 30-minutes to complete.

To begin, the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) was selected over creating a new instrument or using other sources due to its extensive validation and reliability in capturing teachers' multilingual beliefs and practices. Its structured framework, which gathers data on teachers' language-learning background, professional experience, beliefs about multilingualism, and specific classroom strategies, aligns closely with this study's focus on how translanguaging pedagogies are enacted. Additionally, the questionnaire required only a minor modification (adding "Arabic") to align with the linguistic context of Dearborn Public Schools, preserving the integrity of the original tool. Adopting an established, validated instrument saved significant time and resources that would otherwise be devoted to piloting and reliability checks, while still

providing the nuanced data necessary for an in-depth qualitative analysis. Moreover, using this questionnaire allows for potential comparative studies across different contexts, contributing to broader discussions on multilingual teaching perspectives and practices.

The MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) is divided into multiple sections, each aimed at collecting information about language teachers' multilingual practices, beliefs, and teaching strategies. There are five main sections, in which an overview of is provided. Section one, "Language Learning Background," gathers information about the teacher's linguistic history, including mother tongue(s), languages spoken in free time and those in which they feel they can express themselves freely, languages studied at school or university, and any languages they have studied or are currently studying on their own. Questions in section two, "Language Teaching Background," focus on the teacher's professional experience, such as duration of their language teaching career, the languages they are currently teaching, and whether they use the languages outside of school hours and whether they have taught any other languages. Section three, "Beliefs About Language Learning and Teaching," measures the teacher's beliefs regarding the impact of multilingualism, using statements rated on a Likert scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Sample statements include learning multiple languages improves cognitive skills and intercultural competence, whether learning multiple languages hinders language acquisition, and the role of the government and parents in promoting multilingualism. Section four, "Teaching Methods and Activities," explores teachers' specific classroom practices and their approach to using multiple languages in teaching. Questions ask how often they focus on explaining language structures, incorporate students' other languages into lessons, encourage the use of multiple languages during class, and combine activities across different languages. Finally, section five, "Biographical Information," collects basic demographic information,

including the teacher's gender and age group. Each section is designed to assess different aspects of the teachers' multilingualism, their practices, and the influence of contextual factors such as societal beliefs, personal experiences, and institutional support for language teaching.

The creation and development of the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) happened through a systematic five-stage process designed to create a reliable tool for assessing language teacher multilingualism across contexts. In the initial stage, a critical review of existing research on multilingual teachers was conducted. This involved exploring studies that examined teacher beliefs, multilingual classroom practices, and the ways in which teachers use multiple languages. By understanding the current landscape of research, gaps and areas that needed exploration were identified, such as the relationship between teachers' multilingualism and their teaching practices. This review provided the theoretical foundation for the questionnaire. The second stage involved consultations with language education practitioners and experts in multilingualism. The author worked closely with language teachers, teacher educators, and multilingualism researchers to gather feedback and insights. This collaborative approach ensured that the questionnaire reflected real-world teaching experiences and practical concerns. Through informal discussions and interviews with 24 multilingual teachers from different backgrounds, the questions were refined to make them relevant and understandable for language educators. Once the questionnaire was developed, it was tested through a pilot study. A sample of language teachers (57 in total) was asked to complete the questionnaire. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and captured the intended data. After the pilot, reliability tests were conducted to see how consistently the questionnaire performed. These tests helped determine whether the questionnaire accurately measured what it was designed to measure. Based on the feedback and reliability tests, the questionnaire was refined further.

In the fourth stage, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to analyze the data from the pilot study and reduce the number of items in the questionnaire. PCA is a statistical method that identifies underlying patterns in data and helps determine which questions contribute most to the overall measurement. The goal was to eliminate redundant or irrelevant questions while keeping those that provided the most useful and reliable data. This process ensured that the questionnaire was efficient and focused, while still capturing a comprehensive picture of teacher multilingualism. The final stage involved Factor Analysis based on data from a larger sample of 460 multilingual teachers. Factor analysis is another statistical technique used to validate the structure of the questionnaire. It helps confirm whether the identified components (or factors) of teacher multilingualism, such as beliefs about language learning or classroom practices, are accurate and meaningful. This step further ensured that the questionnaire was both reliable and valid for use in a variety of multilingual teaching contexts. In summary, this five-stage process ensured that the MULTITEACH questionnaire was theoretically grounded, practically relevant, and statistically reliable for evaluating teacher multilingualism on a large scale (Calafato, 2020).

While the original MULTITEACH questionnaire aimed to gather data from a large pool of teachers to analyze multilingual teaching practices statistically, this embedded case study focused on only three teachers. This allows for in-depth exploration of their multilingual teaching practices within their specific classroom contexts. Though the original questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) quantitatively measured constructs like beliefs about multilingualism and teaching practices, the qualitative approach emphasizes interpretation of how these constructs manifest in real teaching situations. The qualitative approach provides a flexibility to modify the questionnaire to fit this study's research needs, focusing on specific trends or topics more relevant to the particular teachers and classrooms. Ultimately, in addition to the questionnaire,

the inclusion of other qualitative methods like classroom observations and interviews enables the triangulation of the data and gaining a more holistic understanding of the teachers' multilingual practices in their English Language Arts classrooms (Evers & van Staa, 2010). This approach is particularly suited for this present study, where understanding individual teacher experiences is key to the analysis of educator's perspectives and practices of multilingualism in Dearborn Public Schools.

Analysis of MULTITEACH Questionnaire

Using the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) as a guide towards better understanding the teacher *stances* (García et al., 2016), the questionnaire served as a valuable tool to assess teachers' language learning and teaching backgrounds, their beliefs about language learning, and their teaching methods (Calafato, 2020). Though it has not been widely adopted yet due to its recent creation, its development involved a rigorous process of validation which is discussed earlier in this section as including piloting multiple versions of the questionnaire across different countries and hundreds of educators, gathering feedback, and ensuring the systematic analysis of responses to guarantee the reliability of the instrument. In the application of the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020), the responses are used as a qualitative lens to explore how these teachers perceive their application of multilingual practices, particularly in alignment with the three components of translanguaging pedagogy. While coded for *stance* in RQ1, the MULTITEACH questionnaire not only captures teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the use of multiple languages, but also their perceived *design* and *shifts* of multilingual practices in lesson plans and during teaching when responding to students' multilingual needs.

This qualitative adaptation of the MULTITEACH questionnaire supports the investigation of how teachers' multilingual beliefs and perceived practices align with CMLA, offering a deeper understanding of how translinguaging pedagogies are—or are not—enacted. As such, Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) was integrated as a key analytical framework alongside *stance* (García et al., 2016), specifically, language value and use (see **Table 3**). CMLA emphasizes the importance of understanding how social, political, and historical factors shape language ideologies and practices in multilingual settings. This approach helps bridge the gap between multilingual theory and classroom realities, addressing the critical intersection of language, power, and equity in multilingual learning spaces. This awareness goes beyond simply recognizing the existence of multiple languages—it requires an understanding of how power dynamics and systemic inequities influence language use in education. The MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020) aids in the exploration of teachers' beliefs and perceived practices in relation to these broader socio-political contexts, providing insight into how aware teachers are of the critical dimensions of language use in classrooms. By examining the teachers' responses to the MULTITEACH questionnaire, there can be a better understanding how (or whether) teachers critically engage with issues such as linguistic hierarchies, language rights, and the marginalization of Arabic in historically English-only spaces like Dearborn Public Schools.

Summary of Methodology

In all, this chapter has outlined the study's methodological approach to investigating district educators' beliefs and practices related to multilingualism in Dearborn Public Schools, focusing on both district-wide perspectives and classroom-level enactments. The chapter presented an embedded case study design (Scholz & Tietje, 2002) that captures not only the

overarching district dynamics but also the distinct subunits (e.g. classrooms, schools, and district staff) that shape language practices on a day-to-day basis. Convenience sampling was employed to recruit participants in diverse roles, ensuring that a range of insights would be gathered on how language policies and instructional strategies intersect. Data collection combined interviews, classroom observations, and the MULTITEACH questionnaire (Calafato, 2020), each aligned with one or both of the study's key research questions. To analyze these data, the framework of Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) was used alongside translanguaging pedagogy components (*stance*, *design*, and *shifts*; García et al., 2016), offering a way to move systematically from beliefs to classroom realities. By establishing these methodological choices and their rationale, this chapter provides the groundwork for interpreting the findings presented in the next chapter, where the interaction between district beliefs and classroom practices becomes more fully apparent.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of an embedded case study investigating district educators' beliefs and practices regarding multilingual language practices in Dearborn Public Schools. The findings are structured to address two research questions:

3. What are the beliefs and perceived practices of district educators who work with Arabic-speaking students regarding teaching and learning in multiple languages?
4. How are teachers' beliefs and perceptions about multilingual practices reflected in their classroom practices with Arabic-speaking students?

To answer the first research question, the chapter applies Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) to explore how district educators perceive their students culturally and linguistically, their understanding of language use within the Dearborn community, and the role of societal norms in shaping linguistic practices. The analysis of the first research question is largely informed by the district educator interviews and classroom teachers' responses to the MULTITEACH Questionnaire (Calafato, 2020), whose insights provide a foundation for answering the question. Building on this foundation, the findings for the first research question include translanguaging pedagogy to analyze district-wide stances on multilingual practices. While the three components of translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2016) are traditionally applied within classroom contexts, this chapter broadens its use to examine district-level dynamics. This approach helps to bridge the analysis from district beliefs to classroom observations, where *stance*, *design*, and *shifts* are examined.

The second research question further interrogates translanguaging pedagogy, specifically through *design* and *shifts*, using interviews and observations to explore how beliefs and policies are actualized—or not—within classroom practices. Throughout the findings, the two research

questions are connected to highlight the gap between district-level beliefs and classroom implementation, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for linguistically inclusive practices in Dearborn Public Schools. Through interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaire analysis, the chapter identifies the relationship between educators' personal and professional beliefs, (un)official district policies, and actual classroom practices. At the heart of this study, Dearborn serves as a compelling case for exploring multilingual education, given its unique sociolinguistic context where Arabic is both a dominant community language and a minoritized one in educational spaces. This context highlights the tension between community pride in cultural heritage and systemic pressures toward monolingual (English-only) norms.

Research Question #1: District Educators' Beliefs and Perceived Practices

Community and Identity: Dearborn as a Multicultural and Multilingual Ecosystem

Understanding the beliefs and perceived practices of district educators who work with Arabic-speaking students regarding multilingualism requires situating these perspectives within the unique sociocultural and linguistic context of Dearborn, Michigan. With its vibrant Arab American community, Dearborn provides a rich backdrop for examining the intersections of language, culture, and systemic power structures. To begin addressing the first research question on district educators' beliefs and perceived practices about teaching and learning in multiple languages, this section uses Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) as an analytical framework. CMLA emphasizes how language intersects with power, identity, and systemic structures, challenging educators to critically engage with historical, sociopolitical, and cultural forces shaping language practices (García, 2017). By analyzing educators' reflections on

Dearborn's cultural identity, internal community dynamics, and the broader sociopolitical landscape, this section reveals foundational beliefs about language use across the district.

Educators in Dearborn frequently described the community as a tightly woven network of mutual support, where cultural pride and collective responsibility are central to its identity. Mrs. Abbas, a longtime educator in the district, emphasized the self-reliance of Dearborn's Arab American population when saying, "I really, really believe that in Dearborn, we all take care of our own. And we are a self-sufficient community." This belief aligns with CMLA, in which language and culture function as resources for social resilience (García, 2017). For educators like Abbas, the shared linguistic and cultural heritage of the community creates a foundation for solidarity and self-sufficiency. This belief underscores the importance of preserving linguistic diversity within educational settings, providing a potential insight into how educators conceptualize the role of language in their work. Principal Haddad describes how this is actualized across the community in her interview where she shares her experiences with English and Arabic being born and raised in Dearborn,

I would say that my first language was ²عربي, but I had more support and there's more language in English growing up, and so I use English primarily with everyone around me. And then with my kids, I kind of codeswitch and my mother, I speak to her in عربي only because she doesn't speak English. She just never learned. She's been here since the seventies, but never really had to learn because we were all translators for her and the grocery stores, the doctor's office, everything was in عربي so she never had to really learn.

² Translation: Arabic; pronunciation: 3arabee (with no English equivalent sound or letter, the number 3 represents the Arabic letter ع)

There is a naturally occurring movement in the community that has allowed Principal Haddad's mother to not need to learn English in order to go about her life. The community structure has uplifted businesses that offer themselves in Arabic, thus uplifting its community of Arabic speakers to be self-sufficient.

However, Principal Haddad's reflection also emphasizes a common sentiment across the Arab educators who grew up in Dearborn, Michigan where there was a systemic privileging of English in formal settings, a phenomenon rooted in colonial histories that devalue minoritized languages. This narrative highlights the structural inequalities that influence linguistic hierarchies, demonstrating how educators' beliefs are informed by their lived experiences—that some languages, while celebrated socially, do not belong in the classroom. While these strong community connections in Dearborn reflect Bhabha's (1990) conceptualization of a Third Space challenging dominant power structures and creating new hybrid spaces outside the classroom, the continued prioritization of English in Dearborn classrooms highlights tensions with Gutiérrez's (2008) notion of sociocritical literacy in the Third Space.

This narrative is deepened when considering that all the Arab educators who had been interviewed for this study, by chance, were students at the Dearborn Public Schools. They themselves have witnessed the evolution of the school system across decades. As such, many educators in Dearborn have deep personal ties to the community, having grown up in the district and spent their careers serving its students. Principal Salim, for instance, highlighted how his professional identity is intertwined with his connection to Dearborn,

I mean, again, I was born in Dearborn, worked in Dearborn. It's a diverse community, different cultures, and that's the beauty of it. So my connection again is my family has the same story as a lot of these immigrants to the United States. Come from nothing, work

hard and help others. Right. That's Dearborn for you. I mean, we still get the immigrants that come from overseas for another opportunity, and I enjoy assisting the community in that manner, whether it's through education or other support systems that Dearborn offers and doing my part in that way, and I can relate to that because we're all part of that. So again, teaching in Dearborn was what I always wanted to do. Giving back to the community is what I've always wanted to do, and I've been fortunate to do it for the last 24 years.

He then went on to share how he eventually taught at and became assistant principal at the very same school he graduated high school from in the district.

Principal Salim's reflections accentuate the significance of educator positionality in shaping beliefs about multilingualism. By situating himself as a participant in Dearborn's linguistic ecosystem, Principal Salim aligns with CMLA's emphasis on viewing language as a dynamic and situated practice. His reference to shared immigrant experiences positions him as both a participant in and an advocate for the community. This connection feels especially critical when emphasizing him saying, "we're all part of that." It enables educators like Principal Salim to approach language not merely as a pedagogical tool but as a cultural and historical marker of identity. Both principals' descriptions highlight the community's cultural specificity and the sense of belonging it fosters. This cultural continuity allows educators like Principals Salim and Haddad to approach their work with a deep understanding of their students' linguistic and cultural realities, aligning with García's (2017) push for educators to engage with the sociocultural contexts of language use.

One of the most significant findings from the data is the extent to which district educators in Dearborn are themselves deeply embedded in the community. As previously noted, many of

the educators interviewed were born, raised, and educated in Dearborn, and this shared history with their students creates a unique dynamic in their beliefs and practices regarding multilingualism. This positionality aligns with the principles of CMLA, in which educators' own linguistic and cultural experiences shape their understanding of language as both a resource and a site of systemic power struggles. By being part of the same community as their students, these educators bring personal, cultural, and linguistic insights to their professional roles, blurring the lines between “insider” and “outsider.” The shared histories between educators and students in Dearborn create a unique dynamic in how language and culture are perceived. Educators often see themselves as role models, bridging the gap between their students' linguistic and cultural realities and the systemic expectations of English-dominant schooling. The positionality of district educators as members of the Dearborn community has influenced their beliefs and practices regarding multilingualism.

Many educators reflected on their own experiences as students in Dearborn Public Schools and how those experiences inform their current roles. This cyclical connection—of being educated in the system and returning to contribute to it—illustrates how educators' personal histories influence their professional practices. Such continuity reinforces the importance of linguistic and cultural affirmation, as these educators carry firsthand knowledge of the systemic challenges and opportunities that shape multilingual education in Dearborn. These findings illustrate a collective Third Space, which, as Gutiérrez notes, “despite the tensions and contradictions... participants persist in a conscious struggle for intersubjectivity, a shared vision of a new educational and social future achieved in a range of ways and degrees” (2008, p. 154). For example, educators like Mrs. Baker, being part of the community extends beyond her role as a teacher. She actively participates in civic and cultural activities, reinforcing her commitment to

understanding and supporting the community's needs. Mrs. Baker's emphasis on listening and engaging deeply with the community aligns with CMLA's principles of critical reflection and engagement. Her defensive stance toward outsiders' critiques of Dearborn further illustrates the depth of her connection to the community:

I feel very defensive of Dearborn when people who would be considered outsiders bring up issues that we might be having because there are so many complexities to it that I feel like if you're not here and you're not part of what's going on, maybe listen to understand first or listen to other parts of it and then critique. But it's very hard for me to listen to outsiders complain about what's happening here.

This protective attitude demonstrates the complexities of insider positionality. While her commitment to the community fosters a deeper understanding of its cultural and linguistic richness, it also highlights the challenges of navigating external narratives that may oversimplify or misrepresent Dearborn's realities.

Across many of the district educators, community advocacy was a big part of their answers when asked about their roles in the community. Their active involvement reflects a recognition that educational issues cannot be separated from broader community dynamics. Their engagement aligns with García's (2017) emphasis on the interconnectedness of language, culture, and systemic power, positioning them as both educators and advocates. This is highlighted in Mrs. Clark's experience as a white teacher of Arab students witnessing their interactions with their principal who is Arab as well. Mrs. Clark draws on an experience with one of her students, pointing out the positive impact of having Arab representation in schooling with Arab students.

... She (the principal) was standing at the locker of a student, and she was speaking in Arabic to her. It struck me on multiple levels how I wish I could do that. How wonderful it is. She is an amazing woman, [Principal's name], and I thought how lucky these kids are that they have her, especially young women, what a role model. And she was talking to the girl and I just thought how much she's reaching her, speaking to her that way, that I cannot, and not that that's a bad thing. That's good that they have the diversity, and they see the differences and stuff, but I don't know. I think it's an amazing thing that many of the teachers can and do speak to them like that. I think that it's so good for the kids, whether they know it or not.

Beyond these interactions with students, Mrs. Clark continues on to discuss this impact with parents as well. How the shared culture and language between some of these educators with students' parents has become districtwide with all communication from the district produced both in Arabic and English for parents and implementing roles for district translators. For Mrs. Clark, the multilingual practices across the district is "special," but it also "has its place." Again, highlighting the dynamics of dominant language practices in education, drawing attention to the value of Arabic as a means of communication within the community rather than a system within the classroom.

In her interview, Principal Haddad describes Dearborn as a, "Middle East without being in the Middle East," which speaks to the unique preservation of cultural and linguistic practices within the city. Her role as an educator and leader is deeply informed by this continuity, as she brings her own experiences of navigating Arabic and English into her approach to education. Principal Haddad's reflections demonstrate how linguistic and cultural resources are not just tools for education but also integral to the identity of the community. While many educators

described their connection to Dearborn as a source of pride, there was also an acknowledgment of differences between their own identities and those of their students. For instance, Mrs. Clark's reflections revealed her awareness of being an outsider linguistically, despite her deep cultural familiarity. While not Arab herself, she described feeling integrated into Dearborn's Arab American culture due to her lifelong proximity to the city and her professional and social ties. This dynamic underscores the dual nature of educators' roles as both part of the community and, in some cases, distinct from it. In contrast, Mrs. Baker's and Principal Haddad's experiences as insiders illustrate how shared histories can create a stronger alignment with students' cultural and linguistic identities. However, as García (2017) highlights through CMLA, even shared positionality does not eliminate the systemic challenges that educators must navigate. For example, Mrs. Baker's recognition of the need to, "listen to understand," echoes CMLA's emphasis on critical awareness, showing how even insider educators must remain vigilant against assumptions and oversimplifications about their own community.

East Versus West: Cultural and Linguistic Hierarchies

Understanding the marginalization of language in the classroom requires a closer look at the cultural and linguistic divisions within the Dearborn community. Dearborn's unique demographics reveal a city shaped by its Arab American population, yet divided along geographic, linguistic, and socioeconomic lines. These internal divisions, particularly between East and West Dearborn, create a complex backdrop for educators navigating multilingual and multicultural classrooms. These divides often emerged as significant factors in shaping educators' beliefs about language and identity, as well as the resources available to support them. Mrs. Clark's observations about students debating dialectal differences highlight how linguistic variation plays a role in shaping identity within the classroom. She notes, "Sometimes I hear

them argue about how they say things like, oh, the Yemenis pronounce it this way, but the Lebanese pronounce it this way.” This seemingly lighthearted exchange reveals deeper cultural dynamics. This is evident as Mrs. Clark continues,

So sometimes it’s just food and language, but I see subtle, well, when there’s kids that come in and confide in me about drama, I see them creating a hierarchy... And so I mean, I guess that’s a natural occurrence. I’m sure. I mean, from an outsider’s view, that’s what I see happening in the Middle East, right?

Students use language not only as a tool for communication but also as a marker of identity, even creating hierarchies based on pronunciation and regional origins. This mirrors broader societal dynamics in the Middle East, where dialects often signal social, regional, or even class distinctions (Alsudais et al., 2022). These interactions, while fostering cultural awareness, can also perpetuate divisions, reflecting the complexity of fostering unity within a linguistically diverse student body.

Mr. Hall expands on this, explaining that even within Arabic-speaking communities, dialectal differences can act as barriers:

So for example, I don't speak Arabic. There’s people here who speak Arabic, but they can’t understand the Yemen Arabic. It’s almost to them like a foreign language. And people shop at their store and only their store from where they’re from. So that’s where they’re united kinda, that they’re Arabic [sic], but they’re also divided into their little subgroup. So if you’re not here, you don’t, and you’re just somebody from the outside looking in, you don’t get to see that... So being a part of the community, you get to see a little bit more of that. Some of the teachers have a tough time talking with the parents and they speak perfect Arabic, but because the dialect is different, there’s certain words

they're like, well, they just don't understand. And then people just shop at their stores and if they want to, they don't have to learn English because they have their own little community that they're a part of. So they're kind of united on some things, but then they're completely divided because of those barriers. They have their own cultural barriers within a similar culture that somebody from the outside wouldn't see at first glance unless they're here.

This disconnect is further reflected in social behaviors, as he describes how community members often shop only within their linguistic or cultural subgroup. These divisions, while culturally significant, can also limit broader social cohesion. For teachers, these nuances complicate interactions with both students and their families, as even fluent Arabic speakers may struggle to connect across dialects. Mr. Hall's insight highlights the importance of not only recognizing linguistic diversity but also understanding the ways in which it shapes relationships and access within the community. These observations directly address the first research question by uncovering how educators perceive and respond to the complex linguistic and cultural dynamics of the Dearborn community. For instance, while educators like Mrs. Clark acknowledge and value students' linguistic identities, they also recognize the hierarchies and tensions that exist within these identities. This creates a nuanced perception of multilingualism where language is both a resource and a source of division. These perceptions influence how teachers interact with students and structure their classrooms, shaping the broader educational environment.

Mrs. Rahman's reflections provide a historical context for these divisions. She describes how Dearborn's neighborhoods have shifted over time, with South Dearborn becoming home to newer Yemeni immigrants, East Dearborn housing a mix of Arab populations, and West Dearborn gradually becoming more diverse. These geographic patterns reflect broader

socioeconomic divides, with West Dearborn being described as “more affluent” by Mrs. Baker. This disparity trickles into the classroom, as students from different neighborhoods bring varying levels of linguistic and educational resources. Mrs. Naser notes that these differences often surface in student interactions, with administrators needing to address conflicts rooted in cultural or linguistic misunderstandings. This raises critical questions about equity and the role of schools in bridging these divides. The responses from educators also reveal underlying beliefs about how language and culture should function in the classroom. For example, the focus on East and West Dearborn divisions highlights how educators frame access to resources—including linguistic resources—as tied to systemic inequalities. Educators like Mrs. Clark and Mr. Hall see their roles as navigating these inequities while addressing students’ diverse needs. However, they also reveal the challenges of building unity in a community where differences are deeply embedded in linguistic and cultural practices.

Considering CMLA, these dynamics underscore the importance of engaging critically with the cultural and linguistic hierarchies present in classrooms. Educators’ beliefs about multilingualism, as shaped by their understanding of community divisions, highlight a tension between promoting inclusivity and addressing systemic inequities. While these divisions reflect the rich diversity of the Dearborn community, they also pose challenges to creating inclusive educational environments. By understanding and addressing these nuances, educators can foster a sense of unity that celebrates linguistic and cultural variation rather than allowing it to reinforce inequities. Even more, these teachers can encourage their students to take an active role as “historical actors” in shaping their own educational experiences through initiating conversations about Dearborn’s neighborhood-based disparities and language hierarchies (Gutiérrez, 2008). Such an approach not only disrupts ingrained monolingual assumptions, but

also empowers students to analyze, critique, and reimagine the social landscapes they inhabit. These findings contribute to the first research question by demonstrating how educators perceive multilingual practices as shaped by community dynamics. Their beliefs about language reflect a broader understanding of how systemic, social, and cultural factors intersect in the classroom. This analysis echoes CMLA, in which there is a need for educational approaches to not only respect linguistic diversity, but also to address the underlying hierarchies that influence how students experience language and identity in school.

Language Value and Use: عربي and the “Dearborn Bubble”

Across all the district educator interviews, educators consistently framed Arabic as more than a tool for communication; it was described as a vital link to cultural heritage and identity. Mrs. Clark acknowledged this dynamic while reflecting on the unique environment provided by Dearborn schools.

The community and space, I mean, it’s full of the Arab culture. I’m learning a lot about the different places that the kids I teach are from and how they see each other. But I think that it’s so unique and then I tell them this, you have this bubble that you live in. You really do. And because I want them to appreciate that because I just think that it’s so unique and it’s so special because I think that they have so much of their culture around them at home, outside their home. When they leave and they come to school, they see people who look like them, who talk like them, who they don’t necessarily have to experience that otherness. And I think that that offers them a safe space to grow up. I feel like I happy for them that they have that.

For educators in the Dearborn Public Schools, this “bubble” represents both a strength and a challenge. The bubble fosters cultural affirmation, allowing students to maintain their linguistic

and cultural identities without fear of marginalization. Within this unique environment, students are surrounded by peers, educators, and community members who share their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, creating a sense of belonging that is often absent for marginalized groups in mainstream educational settings. At the same time, it raises critical questions about how students are prepared to navigate sociolinguistic contexts outside Dearborn. Mr. Hall highlighted this duality:

A lot of these kids are like, they don't leave Dearborn. Some of 'em really, you know what I mean? They're in this little bubble. And so the textbooks set to be more to people who aren't exposed to another culture. When our kids need to know what's going on in the United States or what's shaped our past right or wrong so that they got an idea.

Because a lot of the other people, they have that.

Though Hall's comments may reflect a deficit perspective, they also indicate the tension that educators face in balancing affirming students' cultural and linguistic practices with fostering critical engagement with dominant power structures. García (2017) encourages educators to move beyond such deficit framings, instead viewing students' linguistic and cultural grounding as a strength that can be leveraged for broader critical engagement that challenge these dominant power structures. As such, while some educators acknowledged the systemic barriers to maintaining multilingual identities, others emphasized the importance of affirming students' linguistic practices in the classroom. Mrs. Baker, for instance, explicitly challenged traditional English-only policies.

The only time I'll ever ask is when I know a student is heated and it comes out and I want to make sure that they're not disrespecting another kid. But if they're sharing ideas in Arabic or they're just talking about something in Arabic, I don't assume bad intent. I

don't assume. Oh, because when you tell a kid, no, you have to use English, it comes off to me as disrespectful. Why am I going to tell them how to communicate their thoughts? That's not my place. You can't assume ill intent because they want to use a home language. So the idea of not allowing a student to speak in their native voice seems absurd to me.

Mrs. Baker's stance aligns with CMLA's principles to dismantle linguistic hierarchies and affirm students' full linguistic repertoires as assets. Her perspective considers the first research question by illustrating how educators conceptualize their roles as advocates for linguistic diversity, challenging dominant narratives that frame Arabic as incompatible with academic success. This also highlights the need to interrogate how colonial legacies continue to shape perceptions of linguistic value. These beliefs influence how educators approach multilingualism, often creating tension between systemic expectations and community realities.

The division in linguistic and cultural representation among district educators in Dearborn display dynamics influencing policies, practices, and their enactment in schools. Especially, with many of the district educators bringing a unique positionality to their roles. As Arabic speakers who often grew up within the Dearborn community, their lived experiences align with those of many students and families. This alignment enables them to advocate for culturally responsive practices and to navigate the nuances of Arabic-English multilingualism in an English-dominant education system. However, this alignment does not always translate into advocacy for Arabic use in classrooms. On the contrary, many Arabic-speaking leaders in the district enforce policies that prioritize English instruction and discourage Arabic in classrooms.

This directive reflects systemic pressures tied to standardized testing, curriculum alignment, and broader sociopolitical expectations of English as the language of progress. While

these leaders may personally value Arabic as a cultural resource, their policies often align with a monolingual educational framework that positions English as the primary path to academic success. This duality creates a tension between personal beliefs and professional mandates, complicating the district's approach to multilingual education. For example, Arabic-speaking leaders might advocate for translanguaging in theory—acknowledging the cognitive and cultural benefits of leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires—but hesitate to implement these practices in classrooms due to fears of academic or professional backlash. This reluctance reveals the systemic constraints shaping even the most culturally aligned leaders, highlighting how policy decisions are often influenced by mainstream external pressures rather than solely by community needs.

The differing positionalities of Arabic-speaking administrators and support staff and non-Arabic-speaking classroom teachers in this study further shape the disconnect between district policies and classroom realities. While administrators' directives discourage Arabic use, classroom teachers are left to interpret and implement these policies without the cultural or linguistic tools to mitigate their impact. This gap highlights a key challenge in multilingual education: aligning district-level policies with the lived realities of linguistically diverse classrooms. Moreover, this dynamic raises questions about the role of cultural and linguistic representation in shaping effective policy. While Arabic-speaking leaders bring invaluable insights into the cultural and linguistic needs of the community, their alignment with systemic expectations often undermines the inclusivity they seek to promote. Conversely, classroom teachers, who may lack this cultural alignment, rely heavily on district directives, making them less likely to challenge policies that may not serve their students' best interests.

Ultimately, the lasting impacts of colonialism on language practices were a recurring theme in educators' reflections. Principal Salim articulated the complexity of maintaining Arabic as both a personal and cultural priority within a system dominated by English.

To the Arabic language? My relationship, I try to hang onto it as much as I can. It's kind of difficult, and I try to give it to my kids as well, which has been a challenge... it's just easier to talk in English. But I personally believe in the importance of them understanding and speaking their language, and more importantly, part of the reason why I stayed in Dearborn was I wanted my students to experience the culture and the religion in that kind of environment. So in terms of the language, I think it's important. Again, I can't write it, but I think for someone that's born here, I can speak it, I can communicate, I can understand, and at the minimum, that's what I'd like to instill in my kids. But it is a challenge to be honest.

This sentiment reflects a broader dynamic shaped by colonial histories, where the dominance of English as the language of progress marginalizes Arabic even within majority Arabic-speaking communities. Principal Salim's acknowledgment of the ease of using English illustrates how oftentimes systemic pressures challenge efforts to sustain Arabic. His reflections reveal a tension between personal values and systemic realities, underscoring how colonial legacies continue to influence language use at individual and institutional levels. These influences complicate the realization of a Gutiérrez's Third Space (2008) across classrooms in the school district, where students and teachers might actively transform oppressive language hierarchies. Principal Salim's commitment to instilling Arabic in his children despite these challenges demonstrates the importance of cultural preservation. These challenges reflect the systemic power dynamics that devalue multilingualism in favor of monolingual standards. Broadly across the district, educators

like Principal Salim are navigating a colonial inheritance that positions English as a superior and necessary language while reducing Arabic to a secondary or social domain.

When interviewing Mr. Hall, his comments provided further insight into the challenges faced by multilingual students in an English-focused education system. He highlights that a large percentage of students struggle with English because it's their second language, especially when they encounter academic language for the first time. He shares a common belief that immersing students in English is the best way to help them succeed academically. His reflection shows how students' home languages, like Arabic, are often left out of the classroom, even though these languages are central to their lives outside of school. Mr. Hall's comment about students needing, "more of how you say the white stuff," deepen the tension between helping students succeed in a system dominated by English and maintaining their cultural and linguistic identities. He seems to suggest that adopting more mainstream cultural practices is necessary for students to fit in and move forward in American society. While this may come from a practical place, it also risks sidelining the strengths and value of students' home languages and cultures, making it seem like those are barriers rather than resources.

Mr. Hall also mentions that having an Arabic-speaking co-teacher makes a big difference in managing the classroom because she can understand what students are saying and address it directly. This points to the importance of having teachers who share students' linguistic backgrounds, but it also highlights how Arabic is often used in schools more for discipline than for learning. Instead of using students' home languages to enhance their education, they are mostly treated as tools for control or correction, which limits their potential in the classroom. Finally, Mr. Hall explains how students are immersed in Arabic at home—through conversations, media, and their overall environment—but experience a completely different

expectation in the classroom, where English is the only focus. This separation between home and classroom languages creates a gap in how students can fully use and develop their language skills. Rather than seeing their ability to switch between languages as a strength, the system treats their multilingualism as a challenge to overcome. This situation shows an opportunity to use students' full language abilities in the classroom. If educators and school systems embraced both English and Arabic, students could learn in a way that values their backgrounds while also helping them succeed academically. Instead, the focus on English alone limits how schools can connect with students and their families and misses out on the benefits of being multilingual.

District Educators' Stances: Perceptions of Language Use in Schooling

The *stance* component in the translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2016) builds upon the foundation established by Critical Multilingual Awareness (García, 2017) in the analysis of district educators' beliefs about multilingualism. While CMLA emphasizes the broader sociopolitical, cultural, and historical dimensions of language practices—challenging educators to interrogate power dynamics and systemic inequalities—the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* focuses on the individual and collective beliefs that inform educators' day-to-day interactions with multilingual students. Together, these frameworks provide a complementary and layered analysis of the first research question: What are district educators' beliefs and perceived practices about teaching and learning in multiple languages?

CMLA sets the stage by contextualizing educators' beliefs within Dearborn's unique sociolinguistic landscape, where Arabic operates both as a dominant community language and a minoritized language in educational spaces. By analyzing how educators view their students' linguistic and cultural identities through CMLA, the findings reveal the structural tensions that position English as the primary language of progress while reducing Arabic to social domains.

These insights highlight the systemic power dynamics that shape educators' beliefs, such as the lingering impacts of colonialism and the pressures of standardized testing. Building on this, the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* offers a focused lens to examine how these broader perspectives translate into specific beliefs about multilingualism in educational practice. For instance, while CMLA emphasizes the need to dismantle linguistic hierarchies, *stance* explores whether and how educators view students' home languages as assets within the classroom. The findings reveal an openness among many educators to support home language use, yet this openness is mediated by systemic constraints, individual positionalities, and professional training.

Translanguaging pedagogy allows for a nuanced understanding of these beliefs, identifying variations in how educators conceptualize the role of multilingualism in learning and the tensions they navigate between systemic mandates and community realities. Together, CMLA and pedagogical translanguaging's *stance* enrich the analysis of district educators' beliefs by bridging the macro and micro levels of research. CMLA interrogates the broader sociopolitical forces that shape linguistic ideologies, while the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* delves into the localized beliefs and values that inform educators' daily practices. This complementary relationship ensures that the analysis not only identifies systemic barriers to multilingual education, but also uncovers the possibilities for fostering more inclusive linguistic practices in Dearborn Public Schools' classrooms. By linking these two frameworks, these findings aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how educators' beliefs about multilingualism are situated within and influenced by both systemic forces and personal convictions.

Administrators like Principal Haddad emphasized the importance of professional development to align educators' *stances* with best practices in multilingual education. "If we want teachers to embrace multilingualism, we need to give them the tools to do so." This statement reflects a key dimension of the translanguaging pedagogy *stance*: while educators may express openness to multilingual practices, their ability to fully adopt and implement such practices depends on their access to systemic support and training. The *stance* component reveals how educators' beliefs about multilingualism are dynamic and shaped by the resources available to them. Principal Haddad's emphasis on professional development underscores the critical role of institutional support in nurturing these beliefs. Without adequate training, even educators who value multilingualism may struggle to move beyond surface-level acknowledgment to active integration of students' linguistic repertoires into their teaching. This highlights a gap between intent and implementation, where educators' *stances* remain aspirational rather than actionable due to systemic constraints.

By focusing on professional development, Principal Haddad's perspective aligns with translanguaging pedagogy *stance's* emphasis on fostering educators' understanding of multilingualism as a resource rather than a challenge. Tools such as translanguaging pedagogy training, classroom strategies for integrating home languages, and methods for addressing linguistic hierarchies are essential in bridging this gap. These tools help educators not only affirm their belief in multilingualism but also translate these beliefs into actionable practices, more shown in the *design* and *shifts* components, that support students' linguistic and academic development. In this way, the *stance* component helps unpack the variability in educators' openness to multilingualism, showing how these beliefs are influenced by the balance between personal convictions and systemic supports. It also reveals the importance of professional

development as a mechanism for transforming educators' *stances* into practices that align with best practices in multilingual education. By examining beliefs through the lens of *stance*, this analysis highlights how systemic factors like training and resources directly impact the ways educators perceive and enact multilingualism in their classrooms.

The adoption of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP; Echevarría et al., 2004) by Dearborn Public Schools reflects a district-level attempt to address the instructional needs of its high concentration of English Learner (EL) students. However, analysis through the lens of the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* reveals a critical gap: while SIOP is often praised at the administrative level as a thriving framework, classroom educators exhibit varying degrees of familiarity, engagement, and alignment with its principles, creating dissonance between policy and practice. For instance, Mr. Hall's reflection on SIOP, "I probably do some of the stuff. I just can't give you anything specific on it..." illustrates a disconnect between district-level advocacy for SIOP and its practical relevance in classroom teaching. He also provides an anecdote about how instructional protocols evolve in name over time, which underscores a perception that SIOP, like its predecessors, may be viewed as another top-down initiative with limited grounding in the day-to-day realities of teaching. This sentiment reflects a broader critique within educational research, where SIOP's emphasis on English as the medium of instruction has been critiqued as reinforcing deficit perspectives on students' home languages. Yet, for educators like Mr. Hall, the protocol does not seem to hold a central place in shaping their *stance* toward multilingualism, further distancing its theoretical foundations from classroom realities.

Mrs. Clark's remarks reveal additional dimensions of this gap, "It's not something that I focus on in any...well, it's not something I guess that I really need to do." By attributing SIOP's applicability to specific contexts, such as classrooms with newcomer EL students, she signals a

compartmentalized view of the protocol as relevant only for specialized instructional scenarios rather than as a framework for supporting multilingual practices across the board. This perspective, combined with her comment about not being the “right” person for the role of teaching multilingual students, highlights the practical and systemic challenges of embedding SIOP into classroom teaching. Her *stance* reflects a tension between the protocol’s perceived utility and her own sense of positionality and preparedness. Interestingly, district administrators who champion SIOP appear to diverge significantly from classroom educators in their assessment of its impact. Administrators view it as an essential tool for meeting the needs of multilingual students, yet teachers’ limited acknowledgment of SIOP suggests that its implementation is not fully integrated into their daily practices or beliefs. This dissonance reinforces the importance of professional development—not only to build educators’ understanding of protocols like SIOP, but also to critically evaluate how such frameworks align with or contradict a translanguaging pedagogy *stance* that values students’ home languages as resources.

In analyzing these dynamics, the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* helps to reveal the systemic implications of this gap. While SIOP might seemingly align with the district’s goal of supporting EL students, its English-only emphasis runs counter to the principles of translanguaging pedagogy, which advocate for leveraging students’ full linguistic repertoires. The lack of explicit critique or discussion of SIOP’s monolingual tendencies by educators in Dearborn may reflect a broader systemic norm that prioritizes compliance over critical engagement with instructional protocols. At the same time, teachers’ limited engagement with SIOP in practice suggests an implicit resistance to its perceived constraints, even if this resistance is not explicitly articulated as a critique of its underlying philosophy. Ultimately, this

gap between SIOP's intended goals and its reception among educators points to a need for greater alignment between district policies and classroom practices. For SIOP to be more than a district-level initiative, professional development must address not only the mechanics of implementation but also the theoretical tensions it presents in multilingual settings. By doing so, the district could foster a translanguaging pedagogy *stance* among educators that moves beyond protocols like SIOP to embrace more inclusive and asset-based approaches to multilingual education.

The findings did reveal that some of Dearborn Public Schools' district-wide mandates and training programs reflect a strong commitment to supporting its diverse multilingual student population, particularly its Arabic-speaking community. As Mrs. Abbas noted in her interview, the district ensures that every building has Arabic-speaking ELD specialists, recognizing the importance of linguistic representation in meeting the needs of its students. Similarly, Mrs. Naser's repeating this information in her interview that most ELD specialists hired must speak Arabic underscores the district's intentional efforts to align staffing practices with the linguistic realities of its student population. These policies align with an ecology of multilingualism (García & Menken, 2015; García & Sánchez, 2015) through the district's recognition of the value of students' home languages and a willingness to provide targeted support for their success.

However, when analyzed through the lens of the translanguaging pedagogy *stance*, these efforts reveal a subtle discord. While the district's hiring practices and support structures clearly prioritize linguistic diversity, these accommodations often exist in specialized roles rather than being fully integrated into mainstream classroom instruction. The district's focus on training, as noted by Principal Haddad and Mrs. Abbas, offers significant potential to bridge this gap.

Professional development programs that emphasize the cognitive and cultural value of multilingualism could empower educators across all roles—not just ELD specialists—to adopt practices that align with a translanguaging pedagogy *stance*. Such training would help educators integrate students’ home languages into their instructional practices, moving beyond surface-level support to create classrooms where multilingualism is genuinely embraced as a resource for learning. These findings suggest that while Dearborn Public Schools has taken important steps to address the needs of its multilingual students, the current approach remains somewhat fragmented. The hiring of Arabic-speaking staff and the supply of targeted training reflect a genuine commitment to inclusion, yet the dominance of English-dominant frameworks like SIOP in mainstream classrooms highlights the need for further systemic alignment. By extending the values of specialized support to all aspects of instruction, the district could create a more cohesive and inclusive model of multilingual education. This alignment could reinforce that the linguistic and cultural strengths of Dearborn’s student population are fully recognized and utilized in both policy and practice.

The implicit presence of English-only practices in Dearborn’s mainstream classrooms reveals a disconnect between district-wide values of multilingualism and the classroom-level *stances* held by many educators. Although no explicit policy mandates English-only instruction, as one educator noted, the district educator interviews suggest otherwise, particularly in classrooms where teachers do not speak Arabic. These implicit norms shape how teachers conceptualize their roles in supporting multilingual learners and reflect broader systemic assumptions about language learning. Mr. Hall’s statement, “Well, they need so they can, that’s the only way they’re going to master the language,” illustrates a widespread belief that immersion in English is essential for language acquisition. This *stance* aligns with a traditional

view of second-language learning that prioritizes monolingual approaches. However, from a translanguaging perspective, such a belief positions students' home languages as secondary, if not entirely irrelevant, to the learning process. By viewing Arabic and other home languages as outside the scope of academic instruction, this *stance* limits the possibilities for leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires to enhance their learning. Mr. Hall's belief reflects not only personal assumptions, but also the systemic pressures educators face to align with English-dominant norms that prioritize standardized testing and curriculum objectives.

Similarly, Mrs. Clark articulates a justification for discouraging Arabic in her classroom, emphasizing concerns about unsupervised use of the language, "Typically when they use another language that I don't understand...they can say unsavory things to their classmates or say things they don't want me to hear, and I can't have that." While Mrs. Clark's perspective acknowledges the beauty and cultural value of Arabic, her decision to discourage its use reveals how systemic constraints, such as her own linguistic limitations, shape her *stance*. Her comment—"For the most part, I don't find them using it for learning"—further underscores her perception of students' home languages as irrelevant to academic progress, framing multilingualism as a challenge rather than a resource. Her *stance* reflects a common pattern among non-Arabic-speaking educators who, in the absence of systemic support or training in multilingual pedagogy, rely on English-only practices to manage classroom dynamics and align with perceived expectations.

In contrast, Principal Haddad offers a more nuanced view, reflecting a shift toward embracing multilingualism in educational practices:

I know when I was a student here, they would tell my mom, only speak to her in English, only speak to your kids in English. But I feel like that has changed where we want our

kids to be bilingual, trilingual, and learn multiple languages. So how do we teach a lesson? But also, I mean obviously it's English, we're teaching English, but also using عربي to support student learning or using the kids' first language to support learning. So I would say depending on the classroom, I would just encourage if they're able to do so, but also utilizing the kids' first language to enhance learning, because we don't want the kids to think that English only is the only way, but using عربي to support the kid's language and also to learn another language as well. So let's say there was a group of kids in a classroom, English speaking and bilingual speaking, why not enhance it in using both languages so the kids can benefit?

By emphasizing the importance of leveraging students' home languages to enhance learning, Principal Haddad articulates a translanguaging pedagogy *stance* that values students' linguistic resources as integral to their academic development. However, her framing—"depending on the classroom"—suggests variability in how this *stance* is operationalized, influenced by factors such as the linguistic skills of individual teachers and systemic norms that continue to prioritize English. Principal Salim's remarks add another layer to this complexity, acknowledging the context-dependent nature of language use in classrooms. While he advocates for an expectation of English use "as part of a way to get them to grasp and comprehend the language," he also notes the occasional need to use Arabic to "get a message across." This dual perspective reflects the practical realities of multilingual classrooms, where educators must navigate between promoting English proficiency and respecting students' linguistic identities. Principal Salim's *stance* displays an ongoing tension between systemic pressures to prioritize English and the recognition of Arabic's role in fostering a supportive learning environment.

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate the variability in educators' *stances* on English-only practices and highlight the systemic factors that shape these beliefs. The implicit enforcement of English-only norms reflects broader sociopolitical narratives that equate linguistic assimilation with academic success. At the same time, educators' *stances* are influenced by their positionality, linguistic capabilities, and access to professional development. While administrators like Principals Haddad and Salim demonstrate an openness to integrating Arabic into instruction, classroom practices often fall short of this ideal, constrained by systemic expectations and practical challenges. These findings underscore the need for targeted training that aligns educators' *stances* with translanguaging pedagogy, equipping them to see multilingualism not as a barrier, but as a powerful resource for learning. By addressing these gaps, Gutiérrez's (2008) words to, "capture the complexities, the problems, and a hope that makes visible a solution," can be actualized across the Dearborn Public Schools, transforming classrooms into spaces that validate diverse linguistic identities and leverage them for academic success.

Continuing, the discussion around Arabic representation in Dearborn classrooms further highlights the complexities of educators' *stances* on multilingualism. While Arabic is widely spoken in the community, its representation in classroom practices and curriculum remains inconsistent, shaped by individual beliefs, systemic expectations, and broader sociocultural narratives. The integration of Arabic into instruction—whether through informal exchanges, cultural references, or curricular inclusion—reveals both the potential and the challenges of fostering meaningful representation in a predominantly English-dominant educational system.

Mrs. Clark's reflections on using Arabic with her students highlight the nuanced ways in which educators attempt to engage with the language. Her use of common Arabic phrases like

والله (translation: I swear; pronunciation: wallah) and بالله (translation: hurry up; pronunciation: yallah) demonstrates a willingness to connect with her students' linguistic backgrounds.

However, she simultaneously expresses concern about the authenticity of her use, stating, "I don't want them to think that I have the right to use [the language]...and it seems false. I don't want to do that either." This hesitancy reflects an awareness of the complexities of cultural appropriation and positionality, as a non-Arab educator navigating a predominantly Arab American student population. While her efforts to use Arabic phrases can foster a sense of connection and inclusion, they also reveal the broader challenge of representing a language and culture authentically in classrooms where it has historically been marginalized. Mose so, Mrs. Clark's acknowledgment of Arabic as an elective in the curriculum, which she sees as a valuable effort to preserve students' cultural and linguistic heritage, underscores the district's recognition of the importance of representation. However, her comments about integrating Arabic across content areas, "I think it might be hard...but I also think it's healthy for the kids to see people that don't look like them in the text that they read too," suggest a tension between affirming students' identities and exposing them to diverse perspectives. This "windows and doors" approach, while valuable, may inadvertently prioritize external cultural influences over deeper integration of students' home cultures into the core curriculum.

Mrs. Baker's remarks extend this conversation to the lack of representation of Arab culture in instructional resources. Her statement, "There is not one character, author, anybody from the Arabic [sic] culture. Not one," highlights a critical gap in curricular materials that fails to reflect the lived experiences of the student population. This absence not only limits opportunities for students to see themselves represented in their learning but also perpetuates the systemic marginalization of Arab culture within educational spaces. Mrs. Baker's enthusiasm for

integrating Arabic into her classroom through small gestures, such as her favorite word بنفسجي (translation: purple; pronunciation: ba-naf-sa-jee), reveals an educator who values representation and is actively seeking ways to incorporate it, even within the constraints of a standardized curriculum.

These reflections collectively underscore the importance of intentional, systemic efforts to ensure Arabic representation in Dearborn classrooms. While individual educators like Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Baker take steps to engage with the language and culture, these efforts often remain informal and fragmented, dependent on personal interest and initiative. This variability reflects the broader challenge of aligning individual *stances* with district-wide practices that consistently affirm the linguistic and cultural identities of students. From a translanguaging perspective, these findings highlight both opportunities and gaps. The informal use of Arabic phrases, acknowledgment of its cultural value, and individual efforts to incorporate representation are steps toward a more inclusive stance. However, the systemic absence of Arabic in the curriculum, coupled with educators' concerns about authenticity and positionality, limits the potential for deeper integration.

The MULTITEACH Questionnaire

To further explore the translanguaging pedagogy *stance*, this section shifts the focus to individual classroom teachers and their beliefs about multilingualism as captured through the MULTITEACH Questionnaire (Calafato, 2020). By examining the responses of Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Clark, and Mr. Hall (see **Appendix C**), this analysis delves into how their personal *stances* align with or diverge from district-wide goals and systemic expectations. The questionnaire provides a valuable lens to understand the ways these teachers perceive the role of

multilingualism in their classrooms and highlights the extent to which their beliefs are influenced by both personal experiences and broader educational structures.

The responses from the MULTITEACH Questionnaire reveal distinct patterns in how Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Clark, and Mr. Hall perceive multilingualism and its role in their classrooms. Across the questionnaire, Mrs. Baker exhibited strong agreement with statements emphasizing the benefits of multilingualism. She strongly agreed that “learning multiple languages improves cognitive skills” and that “students who speak several languages can serve as linguistic role models for other learners.” Her responses consistently reflected a positive *stance* in the cognitive, cultural, and academic value of multilingualism. For example, she strongly agreed that “learning additional languages improves knowledge of previously learned languages,” demonstrating an understanding of the interconnectedness of linguistic proficiencies. Mrs. Clark also showed agreement with these statements, particularly when considering the practicalities of implementing multilingualism in the classroom. She strongly agreed that learning multiple languages can improve cognitive skills and agreed that multilingual students can serve as role models. This *stance* provides nuance to her cautious approach in incorporating Arabic into her classroom, reflecting an underlying concern about appropriating or misrepresenting her students’ linguistic identities. Mr. Hall’s responses revealed a more pragmatic view of multilingualism. While he agreed with some statements about the benefits of multilingualism, such as its potential to improve cognitive skills, he expressed skepticism about its role in academic settings. For instance, he somewhat agreed with the statement that “learning multiple foreign languages simultaneously can hinder the language learning process,” indicating a belief that multilingualism might pose challenges for students. His responses suggest a *stance* rooted in the belief that English proficiency should remain the primary focus for academic success.

The variability in beliefs about multilingualism is reflected in how these teachers approach their classroom practices, as reported in the questionnaire. Mrs. Baker indicated that she “often” focuses on explaining language structure and pointing out similarities and differences between the target language (English) and her students’ other languages. She also “sometimes” tries to incorporate her students’ home languages into lessons, aligning with her strong belief in the value of multilingualism. However, her reported practices, such as rarely providing spaces for students to combine multiple languages in writing or discussions, highlight the systemic challenges in fully enacting her beliefs. Mrs. Clark reported seeking similarities between students’ home language and the target language, but rarely incorporates multilingual strategies into her teaching. She reported that she “rarely” encourages students to use their home languages during lessons and “never” initiates activities that involve multiple languages. While she “often” focuses on communication and teaching language structure implicitly, her responses suggest a limited engagement with multilingual practices. This aligns with her earlier expressed concern about lacking the cultural and linguistic knowledge to incorporate Arabic meaningfully into her teaching. Mr. Hall’s responses similarly reflected limited use of multilingual strategies. He reported that he “sometimes” focuses on explaining language structure and teaching language pragmatics, but rarely integrates his students’ home languages into instruction. For example, he “rarely” encourages students to translate between languages or connect their home languages with English during lessons. These practices align with his belief that immersion in English is the most effective way for students to succeed academically.

The questionnaire responses highlight a consistent pattern surrounding language use and value (García, 2017): while some teachers demonstrate a stronger belief in the benefits of multilingualism, systemic barriers limit their ability to integrate these beliefs into their teaching.

Meanwhile, other teachers may exhibit more cautious or skeptical stances, influenced by their perceptions of systemic expectations and the logistical challenges of incorporating multilingual strategies. The limited engagement with practices that draw on students' home languages reflects not only individual beliefs but also the broader educational structures that prioritize English-dominant approaches. Recognizing and interrogating these underlying power dynamics may enable educators to move beyond surface-level affirmations of multilingualism (García, 2017). As such, these findings point to the need for targeted professional development and systemic support to bridge the gap between teacher beliefs and practices.

Research Question #2: From Beliefs to Practice: Multilingualism in the Classroom

The second research question, “how are teachers’ beliefs and perceptions about multilingual practices reflected in their classroom practices with Arabic-speaking students?”, builds directly on the first research question’s analysis of district-wide beliefs and *stances* about multilingualism. While the first question employed Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA) and the translanguaging pedagogy *stance* to explore how educators conceptualize multilingualism in theory, the second question shifts the focus to actual practices. It asks how these beliefs are translated into tangible instructional decisions within the classroom, using the *design* and *shifts* components of translanguaging pedagogy as analytical tools. This progression from beliefs to practice is critical in understanding the systemic and individual factors that shape multilingual education. The *stances* explored in the first question serve as the foundation for the *design* and *shifts* in the second question, revealing educators’ approaches toward language use in teaching. For example, teachers’ openness to multilingualism may inform whether they actively *design* lessons that integrate students’ home languages or make real-time instructional *shifts* to accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity.

By examining *design*, this analysis uncovers how teachers intentionally structure their classrooms to support—or exclude—multilingual practices. It considers whether multilingualism is embedded in lesson plans, curriculum materials, and activities or if it remains peripheral to English-dominant instruction. The *shifts* component complements this by focusing on the in-the-moment adjustments teachers make during teaching, reflecting their responsiveness to students’ linguistic needs and their capacity to balance systemic pressures with individual classroom dynamics. Building on the insights from the first research question, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of how systemic beliefs about multilingualism are enacted (or not enacted) at the classroom level. By linking teachers’ *stances* to their *designs* and *shifts*, this approach offers a comprehensive view of the relationship between theory and practice with multilingual education in mainstream classrooms. This framing not only highlights areas of alignment and tension, but also reveals opportunities for professional development and systemic change to support teachers in actualizing their beliefs about multilingualism.

From District Design to Classroom Practices

The *design* component of translinguaging pedagogy offers a lens for understanding how Dearborn Public Schools structure learning environments to support multilingual practices. While the district demonstrates a commitment to linguistic diversity through professional development, curriculum adaptations, and systemic accommodations, insights from district educators reveal gaps in how these initiatives translate into classroom realities. Particularly for the “mainstream” Arabic-speaking students, the findings suggest that multilingual practices are often absent from day-to-day instruction, and the high social value of Arabic within the community is not reflected at the same level in classroom practices.

Curriculum adaptations like the Amplify curriculum similarly highlight a gap between design and execution. Educators in the district noted that Amplify includes Arabic translations of lessons, seemingly to support Arabic-speaking students. Mrs. Dania talks about this more in her district educator interview:

I mean sometimes I will, especially when I'm working in small groups, I'll ask them if they know the answer, like tell it to me in Arabic because I want to assess if they know the answer. But I have that advantage where I can speak to them in Arabic. So if the student answers me in Arabic, I'm like, okay, he knows it. So now my job is to help him communicate it in English. But that's not available in every classroom. It's not like we have some Arabic speaking person in every classroom. So Arabic academically is not really being used. However, Amplify does translate into Arabic. So there are some lessons where the teacher can, it does it automatically where they will, there's vocabulary they can translate into Arabic, which is helpful to some of our students. Obviously we want 'em to write in English. That's the plan. But if all they need is to know what this word means in Arabic, great. So she turns on the translator. She can print the questions in Arabic if she wants, but of course we want them to read in English.

Mrs. Dania's reflections provide an example of how translanguaging pedagogies can facilitate learning in multilingual classrooms. This reflection aligns with the translanguaging pedagogy *design* component of leveraging students' entire linguistic repertoires to enhance comprehension and participation. By allowing students to respond in Arabic during assessments, Mrs. Dania creates an environment where their knowledge can be demonstrated without the barrier of limited English proficiency. This *design* choice reflects a translanguaging pedagogy *stance*, acknowledging that Arabic is not merely a means for communication but a resource for academic

engagement. However, Mrs. Dania also notes the systemic limitations of this approach, “That’s not available in every classroom. It’s not like we have some Arabic-speaking person in every classroom.” This statement emphasizes the uneven application of multilingual practices across the district. While some educators naturally facilitate translanguaging pedagogies due to their linguistic backgrounds, others limit their use of these practices, often attributing this to a perceived lack of resources or confidence in their ability to apply them effectively. This inconsistency highlights a structural issue: the district’s *design* initiatives, such as Arabic translation tools in the Amplify curriculum, are insufficient to address the needs of Arabic-speaking students comprehensively.

Beyond the linguistic backgrounds of the district educators, many of these educators noted that the curriculum’s written translations are ineffective for students who lack proficiency in written Arabic. Mrs. Baker, in her observation interview when asked about her observed classroom language practices, shared that middle school students are more comfortable with spoken Arabic, making the written translations less accessible and illustrating the broader misalignment between curriculum adaptations and students’ actual linguistic proficiencies. This reflects broader patterns described by Fishman (1966) regarding heritage language loss, where first-generation immigrants maintain fluency, second-generation heritage speakers are considered “semi-speakers” (not fluent, but with some level of proficiency in their heritage language), and third-generation speakers often experiencing significant or total language attrition. However, in Dearborn’s context, this model does not fully apply because the strong presence of Arabic across the community and at home helps students maintain oral proficiency, even if their written skills remain limited. Additionally, while the Amplify curriculum’s inclusion of Arabic translations reflects an effort to make core content more accessible to Arabic-

speaking students, its implementation is limited to direct translations for students regardless of their Arabic proficiency. As Mrs. Dania notes, the translations are primarily geared toward providing students with word-level comprehension in Arabic. This reveals a tension within the curriculum's design that while translations can support comprehension, the overarching goal remains English acquisition. The system stops short of fully embracing Arabic as a tool for deeper academic engagement, reinforcing the dominance of English in classroom practices.

Beyond the mechanics of translation, the broader curriculum design inadequately represents Arab culture and language in meaningful ways. As noted earlier by Mrs. Baker, representation of Arab culture in core instructional materials is virtually absent. This absence marginalizes Arabic-speaking students' cultural and linguistic identities, perpetuating the perception of Arabic as peripheral to academic success. Even Arabic offered as an elective, its integration into core subjects remains minimal with funding and staffing issues influencing its availability to students in each school building across the district. Also previously noted, Mrs. Clark's reflections add another layer to this critique. While valuing the preservation of cultural heritage through Arabic classes, she also highlighted the need for broader representation in classroom texts, noting, "They need to see people that don't look like them in the texts they read too." Mrs. Clark's comment highlights the importance of curriculum design in achieving two goals also shared by Mr. Hall in the previous research question: reflecting the identities of Arabic-speaking students to affirm their cultural and linguistic heritage, while also exposing them to diverse perspectives that extend beyond their immediate community.

Socially, Arabic is deeply valued within the community, with systemic accommodations like Arabic-speaking ELD specialists, halal meat in cafeterias, and the recognition of Eid and Ramadan on the school calendar reflecting its community significance. These efforts, widely

praised by educators, normalize and affirm students' cultural practices, fostering a sense of belonging and identity. Mrs. Dania expressed pride in these changes, stating:

That change watching it is phenomenal to me, but the kids just have it. And so when we talk about the Dearborn bubble, I think that's what we mean. Sometimes it's sometimes I wonder if they realize when you leave Dearborn, it's not like that. You can't just go into a school cafeteria and eat if halal meat is something that's important to you because it's not served. And so those, that's why I feel like my community shaped me to appreciate the things that we never had when I was younger and that we do have now, and to appreciate those things.

While students may feel affirmed in their cultural identities outside of the classroom, the lack of inclusion of Arabic into teaching practices creates a disconnect between the social and academic value of their home language. This disconnect is further compounded by the implicit expectation that English remains the dominant language of instruction, even with the absence of an explicit English-only policy.

Despite these limitations, Mrs. Clark demonstrates agency in adapting curriculum to address the unique needs of her students. Reflecting on her instructional *design*, she shares in her observation interview about her planning experience with this unit:

I think I mentioned to you last time we talked that I structured the unit my own way. I used Amplify's resources, but I did it my own way. And that was by front loading all of the knowledge building and so that they kind of started to form opinions and formed a foundation of what was going on and when it was happening. Because a lot of kids this age, they just struggle with relating dates to then and now they struggle to remember that things were not the same and their parents don't talk, especially when you're talking

about a whole different culture and kids whose parents didn't experience the fifties or sixties or seventies in America or their grandparents. So they're not getting that same kind of information like I did, or my kids might because their grandfather was in World War or was in the Vietnam War. So you have make up for that kind of stuff. So that's why I wanted to have them do all the reading first. But like I say, they really liked the stories and they got into it and they had so many questions.

Her decision to prioritize knowledge-building reflects an awareness of the distinct cultural and historical gaps her students face. Many of her students' families have not experienced the cultural and historical moments—such as the Vietnam War—that are often implicitly referenced in mainstream curricula. Mrs. Clark recognizes that these gaps require intentional scaffolding to make the content accessible and relatable. Her approach aligns with the translanguaging pedagogy *design* component in its emphasis on tailoring instructional strategies to students' lived experiences. While she does not explicitly use Arabic in this unit, her focus on building foundational knowledge creates space for students to connect new learning to their cultural backgrounds, even if indirectly. The students' engagement, as she notes, is evident in their curiosity, "They really liked the stories, and they got into it and had so many questions." However, the absence of Arabic as an academic resource within this *design* points to the broader issue of its limited integration. Mrs. Clark's reliance on English resources and historical framing reflects the systemic pressures to conform to monolingual expectations, even as she seeks to bridge cultural gaps for her students.

The systemic accommodations in Dearborn schools affirm Arabic-speaking students' cultural identities, but this affirmation is largely restricted to the social realm. Without corresponding efforts to integrate Arabic into academic instruction, a disconnect persists between

the social and academic value of students' home language. While professional development initiatives are central to the district's efforts to equip teachers with tools to support English Learners (ELs), these efforts fall short in addressing multilingualism. The phonics training program, a 10-week initiative aimed at improving foundational English literacy, was frequently cited by educators as valuable. Mrs. Abbas highlights Brain Friendly Reading (Dwyer & Smith, 2023), describing it as a phonics-based approach to teaching foundational English literacy. Her involvement in this program reflects the district's commitment to improving English literacy for ELs through structured interventions.

This year we've adopted a program called Brain Friendly Reading. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it. It's this new phonics approach. It's basically phonics, but they just put a new name on it, which you know how they always do stuff like that, but it's a new program that we're implementing that is supposed to be really helpful for kids learning English. So I do pull out groups for that. I go in and I co-teach, make the information more accessible. I scaffold where I need to for the students. I modify if I need to for a test and things like that. I eliminate things that they don't need, things that are going to distract them from the contents of what we're trying to assess. I eliminate that so that they have just the content, so we're not grading them based on their language barrier, but we're grading them based on what they know.

As an ELD specialist, Mrs. Abbas co-teaches, scaffolds lessons, and modifies assessments to make the material more accessible. The focus on removing linguistic barriers during assessments aligns with translanguaging's emphasis on valuing students' knowledge regardless of the language in which it is expressed. However, the monolingual structure of the program limits its ability to fully address the needs of Arabic-speaking students, particularly those who are more

comfortable with spoken Arabic than written Arabic. The phonics approach does not account for this linguistic nuance, leaving a gap in how students' existing linguistic resources are leveraged during instruction. Without targeted support for building biliteracy, programs like Brain Friendly Reading cannot truly capitalize on students' linguistic strengths, focusing instead on transitioning them into English proficiency without considering how Arabic could serve as a bridge in the process.

Similarly, as discussed earlier, the district promotes SIOP (Echevarría et al., 2004) as an instructional protocol for ELs. While administrators view SIOP as a vital tool for integrating multilingual strategies, teachers expressed limited engagement with its practices. Mr. Hall, for instance, as previously noted in his district educator interview, "I probably do some of it, but I can't give you anything specific," reflecting a disconnect between the training provided and its implementation in classrooms. Additionally, the district's framing of SIOP as an English-focused instructional protocol limits its compatibility with translinguaging pedagogy. SIOP's emphasis on transitioning students to English proficiency aligns with monolingual norms, neglecting to incorporate students' home languages as active resources in learning. This limitation is particularly problematic in a district like Dearborn, where Arabic is not only a home language, but a culturally embedded identity marker for a significant portion of the student population. Across the three classrooms observed, the consistent focus on vocabulary instruction highlights an intentional effort to build students' background knowledge, aligning with strategies promoted by SIOP. Vocabulary development is a central aspect of SIOP, emphasizing the need to provide ELs with the linguistic tools to access academic content. In these classrooms, this was primarily achieved through structured Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) interactions (IRE; Mehan, 1978), where teachers posed questions about word meanings and students provided answers.

While this approach demonstrates a commitment to addressing linguistic barriers, it also reveals limitations in its alignment with the components of translanguaging pedagogy and the multilingual needs of the district's Arabic-speaking students.

The findings on *design* illustrate a district striving to balance inclusivity with systemic complexities. Professional development initiatives, such as phonics training and the implementation of SIOP, along with curriculum tools like Amplify, reflect thoughtful efforts to address the linguistic needs of multilingual learners. However, these initiatives often do not fully account for the nuanced realities of Arabic-speaking students. For instance, while Amplify includes written Arabic translations, its impact is limited for students who are more comfortable with spoken rather than written Arabic. Similarly, SIOP's focus on English proficiency leaves little room for utilizing students' home languages as a resource within classroom instruction. Systemic accommodations—such as the presence of Arabic-speaking ELD specialists, halal meal options, and the recognition of cultural celebrations like Eid and Ramadan—create an affirming and inclusive environment for Arabic-speaking students. These efforts reflect the district's commitment to celebrating cultural identity. However, this affirmation remains largely within the social domain, with fewer connections to academic practices. Observations indicated that classroom instruction still tends to align with monolingual norms, with limited examples of multilingual strategies integrated into the *design* of lessons. These findings highlight opportunities to more fully integrate multilingualism into the district's educational practices. Strengthening translanguaging pedagogy, expanding bilingual resources, and enhancing professional development tailored to multilingual pedagogy could bridge the gap between the district's goals and the realities of classroom instruction. By aligning the academic value of Arabic with its social importance, the district can ensure that its aspirations for linguistic

inclusivity are realized across all aspects of the educational experience, directly addressing the second research question: how educators' beliefs about multilingualism are translated into classroom practices.

Absent Shifts: Navigating Language Practices in the Classroom

The *shifts* component of translanguaging pedagogy examines the in-the-moment decisions teachers make to adapt instruction to students' linguistic needs. These shifts can reveal how teachers navigate the relationship between systemic expectations, classroom realities, and their own beliefs about multilingualism. For the second research question, classroom observations were analyzed to determine how *shifts* reflected—or did not reflect—multilingual practices in Dearborn Public Schools. Unlike the systemic and professional development-driven aspects explored under *design*, *shifts* illuminate the lived realities of teaching and learning within classrooms. However, a critical finding from this analysis is the absence of multilingual practices in the classrooms observed, despite the linguistic diversity of the students. Across the classrooms observed—those of Mr. Hall, Mrs. Clark, and Mrs. Baker—there were no identifiable instances of *shifts* that incorporated multilingual practices. This aligns with broader patterns noted in interviews, where teachers articulated both systemic expectations and personal limitations as barriers to integrating Arabic into their instruction.

The findings include the upcoming three classroom excerpts to illustrate how multilingual practices are not fully actualized in the classroom and to provide insight into how translanguaging pedagogy *shifts* could have been implemented in these moments. Each excerpt highlights specific interactions and opportunities to integrate students' linguistic and cultural resources, reflecting broader systemic challenges and instructional norms. By examining these excerpts, this section addresses the second research question by illustrating not only how

multilingualism is absent in classroom practices, but also how intentional *shifts* could have bridged students' lived experiences with academic content.

Excerpt 1

Mr. Hall's Classroom (Amplify Unit: Grade 7 – Brain Science)

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- Mr. Hall** Yes. Does that make sense? It's just any spot in there. Don't write to me about... I didn't word the question. Yeah. And then one of 'em, you just need what you think about that place. Then one of them. So it could be about bacteria, it could be about Dr. Harlow's prescription like that. We're talking about Lebanon, New Jersey, which is not over in Asia. That's a city in New Jersey. People are trying to say this happened in the Middle East a couple periods.
- Tarek** There's a place in new Jersey called Lebanon?
- Mr. Hall** Yes. Alright. Number one.
- Maher** Mister it's in New Hampshire.
- Mr. Hall** Or New Hampshire. I'm sorry. Somewhere over there. That's how much I know. Alright, number one, which statement best characterizes doctors understanding of the infection in Phineas' time?
-

In Mr. Hall's classroom, a brief interaction during an Amplify lesson on brain science highlighted an opportunity to connect instruction to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This interaction reflects Mr. Hall's focus on clarifying a student misunderstanding and redirecting the class to the academic task. However, the mention of "Lebanon" appeared to spark curiosity among students, particularly given that Lebanese Americans make up a substantial portion of Dearborn's Arab community. No further exploration of the reference occurred, and the conversation quickly returned to the Amplify task. While the exchange demonstrated Mr. Hall's ability to maintain focus on the lesson, it also revealed an opportunity to connect instruction to students' cultural identities. The geographic term "Lebanon" might have

been an entry point for deeper engagement by prompting students to share personal or cultural knowledge. Such a connection could have provided a culturally relevant context for the content being discussed, fostering student engagement. This excerpt underscores the predominance of assimilationist norms in classroom instruction, where even culturally significant moments are not leveraged to integrate students' home languages or identities into the learning process. The interaction aligns with patterns observed across the study, where the systemic and instructional focus on English can limit opportunities for both multilingual and multicultural engagement.

Excerpt 2

Mrs. Baker's Classroom (Amplify Unit: Grade 6 – The Chocolate Collection)

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- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Noor | Kids under 12 work 12 hours a day and are being forced to work on cocoa farms. Sadly, they lost their education and have to provide food for their family. Also the kids, the kids' safety is in danger because they have to use the machetes and if they don't work fast, they get whipped. |
| Mrs. Baker | ... Your group is going to add one sentence that has a couple of solutions in it, right? So what can we do? Because remember we buy chocolate. So as consumers, what can we do to help? ... |
| Amera | For 12 hours a day. They're treated like slave. They're treated like slaves, they have no education and children are ways to solve this problem that you could buy chocolates that have [the fair trade label]. Lastly, you could write letters to [companies]. |
| Mrs. Baker | Wow, this says all the parts that we needed. Good job guys. She's got the problem, what the problem looks like. And she gave us three different solutions. Buy chocolate from companies that have fair trade, the label. You can write letters and you can boycott companies that don't have a fair trade label. Good work. |
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The observed interaction in Mrs. Baker's classroom, where students discussed child labor in the cocoa industry, presented an opportunity to incorporate translanguaging pedagogy *shifts*

that connected the lesson to the students' lived experiences. While the focus on ethical consumerism and fair trade provided a valuable platform for critical thinking, it could have also been expanded to include discussions on the ongoing genocide in Palestine (Amnesty International, 2024) and the related Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement (Palestinian BDS National Committee, n.d.), which resonate deeply with many Dearborn students and their families (refer to **Situating the Research: Dearborn amid the Palestinian Genocide**; Hammoud, 2024). Incorporating these issues into the discussion would have aligned with translanguaging's emphasis on using students' linguistic and cultural resources to enrich learning. For students with personal and familial connections to the region, this *shift* could have validated their identities while engaging them more deeply in the content.

This consideration is particularly significant in light of the second research question, which explores how teachers' beliefs about multilingualism are translated into classroom practices. Mrs. Baker's approach, while encouraging collaboration and critical engagement, remained structured around monolingual norms. For example, the conversation about ethical consumption took place entirely in English, despite the likelihood that students could have expressed their personal connections more fully in Arabic. Additionally, Mrs. Baker's own acknowledgment during an interview that she found it insensitive for a non-Arab teacher to bring a well-known boycotted coffee brand to school demonstrates her awareness of the importance of culturally relevant practices. This awareness suggests an openness to addressing such issues in the classroom, but also highlights the gap between recognizing cultural relevance and actively implementing translanguaging pedagogy.

The potential to connect this lesson to the BDS movement also would have aligned with broader patterns noted by Mrs. Naser and Mrs. Rahman, who observed that the issue of Palestine

has increasingly unified Dearborn students across different Arab backgrounds. While historical tensions between students from diverse Arab communities were once more vocal, discussions of the genocide in Palestine have fostered solidarity among them. Incorporating this shared concern into lessons could have strengthened students' sense of unity and validated their engagement with issues that matter to their communities. Mrs. Baker's classroom presented an opportunity to extend this unity into academic spaces by integrating discussions about the BDS movement into the lesson on ethical consumerism. However, while translanguaging pedagogy *shifts* encourage in-the-moment decisions that adapt instruction to students' needs, the classroom practices observed in this study often defaulted to monolingual norms. In Mrs. Baker's classroom, these norms limited the potential to connect a globally significant topic to the local and cultural realities of Dearborn's students. By integrating discussions about the genocide in Palestine and related activism into the lesson, Mrs. Baker could have not only deepened students' understanding of ethical consumerism, but also validated their identities and lived experiences (Gutiérrez, 2008), demonstrating how translanguaging pedagogy *shifts* can bridge academic content with personal relevance. This alignment would directly address the second research question by illustrating how teacher beliefs and systemic expectations shape the enactment—or absence—of multilingual strategies in practice.

Excerpt 3

Mrs. Clark's Classroom (Amplify Unit: Grade 8 – The Space Race Collection)

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|-------------------|---|
| Batul | I said he feels safe to, because his father and connect together and he feels fulfilled with his father by his side. |
| Mrs. Clark | His father's not by his side though at this moment. Huh? Okay, so he feels like he's there, right? Ayman, share what you wrote. Hang on folks. When someone's talking, we're listening. |

Excerpt 3 (cont'd)

- Ayman** Fell asleep because you felt at home and nostalgic.
- Mrs. Clark** At home and nostalgic when we're away from home or far away from home, but we have something or someone with us that makes, that reminds us of home and we feel close to home for some reason. You said nostalgic and what else?
- Ayman** At home
- Mrs. Clark** Does that help us be away from home? Does it help us feel better about it? Right? Right. Yeah. Khaled, I want to hear what you said.
- Khaled** He felt safe because when he got the badge. He had comfort.
- Mrs. Clark** He took comfort from it. What else?
- Alaa** That the eagle reminded him of the comfort of the [audio not clear].
- Mrs. Clark** Yes. Yes, exactly. Lena.
- Lena** I put it reminds me of it, is the memories of Lu and his dad together.
- Mrs. Clark** Exactly, guys. So it's not the name of the..., it's not the arm badge that make him feel safe.
- Lena** It's what they mean to him.
- Mrs. Clark** Yes, it's the meaning and the connection and the feelings. He gets the good feelings, right? I always tell my kids that no matter where we are, if they're with me, I'm home because I can make anything work. But I couldn't, I would be just, I'm not as good a version of me when they're not with me. So I think we all have those things in our life, right? All right, let's keep going. Paragraph 10. Kareem, why don't you pull a stick for me

In Mrs. Clark's classroom, a discussion during an Amplify lesson on *The Space Race* centered on the emotional and symbolic themes of comfort, belonging, and safety. The dialogue engaged students in exploring the meaning of a character's connection to an arm badge, with Mrs. Clark guiding the conversation and reinforcing their understanding of the text. Her facilitation encouraged students to think deeply about the text's themes, creating a supportive

environment for critical engagement. While Mrs. Clark’s personal connection to the theme added depth to the discussion, this moment presented an opportunity to bridge her students’ lived experiences with the academic content. By sharing her own reflection on comfort and belonging, Mrs. Clark modeled personal engagement with the text. However, she did not invite her students to share their own connections to the themes discussed. Given the culturally affirming environment of Dearborn, where students often feel represented and safe within the community, this lesson could have been a powerful moment for students to articulate their experiences of comfort and belonging, both within their cultural contexts and in relation to the text (Gutiérrez, 2008).

Mrs. Clark and other district educators have previously described the “Dearborn bubble” as a unique and protective space for students, where they do not experience “otherness” and where representation in teaching staff and community values fosters a sense of belonging. While this bubble offers significant cultural and emotional safety, district educators have noted that it can also insulate students from broader cultural and linguistic contexts. The discussion in this lesson provided an opportunity to connect the strengths of this bubble with a broader perspective, encouraging students to reflect on their cultural identities while engaging with the text’s themes. The absence of a translanguaging pedagogy *shift* in this discussion reflects a broader challenge in translating beliefs about multilingualism into classroom practices. While Mrs. Clark demonstrated strong instructional strategies and an ability to foster emotional engagement, the lack of opportunities for students to connect their linguistic and cultural resources to the text limited the lesson’s inclusivity. These findings highlight the need for greater integration of multilingual strategies to bridge students’ lived experiences with academic content. By

incorporating translanguaging pedagogy *shifts* into lessons like this, teachers can affirm students' identities while broadening their engagement with the world beyond their immediate community.

Ultimately, the absence of observed multilingual *shifts* highlights a key finding for the second research question: while systemic accommodations and teacher beliefs demonstrate openness to linguistic diversity, these practices do not materialize in classroom instruction. Teachers expressed interest in integrating Arabic and acknowledged the potential benefits, but pointed to systemic expectations, lack of training, and their own linguistic limitations as barriers. These moments, where teachers moved past the “Lebanon” reference (see *Excerpt 1*) or did not connect child labor and consumer boycotts to ongoing activism for Palestine (see *Excerpt 2*), reflect the instructional turning points that could have allowed students to act as “historical actors,” collaboratively leveraging their linguistic repertoires and lived experiences to critique and potentially transform the societal structures they exist in (Gutiérrez, 2008). The finding underscores the need for systemic support and professional development to enable teachers to make in-the-moment instructional decisions that embrace students' multilingual resources. By addressing these barriers, mainstream classrooms in Dearborn could better reflect the district's goals of linguistic inclusivity and equity in practice.

The classroom observations underscore a broader trend in which English remains the dominant language of instruction, even in a linguistically diverse context like Dearborn. Despite moments of strong engagement and thoughtful discussion, opportunities to incorporate students' home languages and cultural identities were consistently overlooked. This reflects systemic pressures and instructional norms that prioritize English over multilingual practices, a reality that Mrs. Baker later reflected on in her observation interview as she discussed the systemic

expectation for English-only instruction and her own challenges in navigating and integrating multilingual approaches.

I think it comes down to expectation of that it is hard because expectation is that instruction is English for the school. So following that expectation of instruction, being in English, and I'm the one who's limited. I'm the one who doesn't know what we're saying or how to do it. I'm the one who's limited with the language. So no, it doesn't organically happen. Vocabulary words might come up here and there. Tell me how to say this phrase. Or we talked about how to say chocolate and things like that. But yeah, it doesn't in third hour. If I would've done this in second hour, it would've been a lot of translating and it would've been a lot of discussions between a Yemeni translation versus a Lebanese translation versus, because they will argue, that's not how you say it. And I'm like, okay, but it's how they say it. So there would've been a lot of that, but these kids aren't, it's part of, yes, a hundred percent part of their life. I think almost all of my kids can speak at least two languages in third hour, but it doesn't happen organically, and I don't know if that's because I'm a white teacher and let's face it, they probably had some real crummy experiences using their home language in front of somebody who couldn't speak it or they might've had, I don't know. I think it goes with the expectation that instruction is in English.

This comment underscores how systemic norms, combined with a lack of confidence in her ability to manage multilingual dynamics, restricted her use of Arabic. Mrs. Baker also pointed to the social and linguistic complexities of Arabic, including variations in dialects that could lead to disagreements among students about the "correct" word. This further complicates her ability to navigate multilingual shifts spontaneously.

Mrs. Clark expressed a similar perspective during her final observation interview when asked whether her lack of Arabic use was a deliberate choice. She explained, “If I had the means to do that, I think it would be amazing... But at the same time, I feel like they, since they don’t get out of their culture much, maybe it’s good for them to be around me.” Mrs. Clark’s words reflect a tension between wanting to meet students where they are linguistically and the systemic constraints that prevent her from doing so. While she acknowledged the potential benefits of incorporating Arabic, her comments also suggest that she views her role as providing cultural exposure beyond the students’ predominantly Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

As noted earlier and echoed by other educators in the district, Principal Haddad has observed that many students in Dearborn often lack strong foundational skills in written Arabic, “A lot of the kids, even if they’re عربي... I mean, they may have the spoken aspect of it, but I would say the written and the original عربي, I don’t think they have a strong background in that.” This raises a critical question: why expect students to use Arabic in schooling when it has not been a part of their educational experiences in the past? Mrs. Baker, in reflecting on her classroom dynamics during her final observation interview, wondered whether her students even wanted to use Arabic in their schooling, “I wonder if my kids would even, I wonder what their level of trust with each other and with me would be to take that risk.” This highlights the social dynamics of trust and risk-taking in multilingual classrooms, where students may hesitate to use their home language, even if opportunities are provided. Multilingual practices are not solely about the teacher’s willingness or ability to implement them; they also depend on the students’ readiness to participate in ways that draw on their linguistic and cultural identities. Mrs. Baker’s words underscore the importance of creating a classroom environment where students feel safe and supported to explore their multilingual resources.

Another layer of complexity comes from educators' reflections on their own positionality. Mrs. Baker had candidly noted that her identity as a white teacher might affect her students' use of Arabic in her classroom. This acknowledgment highlights the relational and historical dynamics that shape multilingual practices. Mrs. Baker's comment raises important questions about how teachers' identities and students' past experiences interact to influence classroom language use. Her willingness to reflect on these dynamics invites deeper consideration of how trust and rapport between teachers and students can facilitate or hinder the integration of home languages into instruction. Together, these reflections from educators illuminate multifaceted considerations that influence the absence of multilingual shifts in mainstream classrooms. They highlight systemic factors, such as the prioritization of English, but also delve into relational and cultural dimensions, including the role of trust, positionality, and linguistic diversity. Rather than pointing to deficits, these reflections reveal the depth of educators' engagement with the challenges and opportunities of multilingual practices. They ask critical questions: How can systemic norms be reframed to support organic multilingual *shifts*? What role do trust and relational dynamics play in fostering these practices? How can teachers' positionalities and students' past experiences inform more inclusive instructional approaches? These questions serve as a foundation for exploring how to create classrooms that not only acknowledge students' linguistic resources, but also actively integrate them into learning in meaningful ways.

In newcomer classrooms, where students are still developing proficiency in English, the use of home languages, including Arabic, is considered a necessary and realistic part of instruction. These classrooms embrace multilingual practices because it is understood that students are still transitioning linguistically. However, the classrooms observed for this study were mainstream spaces with students classified as proficient in English, but coming from

multilingual backgrounds. In these classrooms, English-only instruction seems to be the norm, even if not explicitly stated as policy. This dichotomy between newcomer and mainstream classrooms reveals the power of labels in shaping linguistic practices. Students labeled as “English proficient” are often expected to navigate their education solely in English, despite their multilingual realities, whereas students identified as “English Learners” are given more linguistic flexibility. This finding underscores a broader discussion in multilingual education research about the role of labeling and its impact on both expectations and practices. Dearborn is a multilingual community, yet the instructional spaces observed reflect a separation between multilingual social environments and monolingual academic settings. While the district has made strides in acknowledging and supporting its cultural and linguistic diversity, these efforts must extend further into mainstream classrooms to align with the lived experiences of its students.

The absence of Arabic in observed mainstream classrooms challenges us to reconsider how multilingual practices are conceptualized and implemented. Rather than expecting Arabic to emerge organically in spaces where it has not historically been present, efforts should focus on intentionally integrating linguistic diversity into instruction. This includes rethinking how student labels shape instructional norms, providing professional development that empowers teachers to embrace multilingual strategies, and creating curricula that reflect and affirm the linguistic and cultural richness of the community. By addressing these issues, Dearborn Public Schools can take meaningful steps toward fostering multilingual *shifts* that honor and leverage the full range of students’ linguistic resources.

All in all, the analysis for the second research question largely centered around classroom observations. These methods were intended to uncover how multilingual practices, particularly the integration of Arabic, materialized in classroom instruction. However, a notable finding lies

not in what was observed, but in what was absent: there were no instances of multilingual practices in the classrooms observed that could be shared as excerpts in these findings. This absence is significant and stands as a finding in itself, underscoring the lack of observable moments where students' linguistic resources were explicitly acknowledged, leveraged, or incorporated into instruction.

The absence of multilingual excerpts from the observations does not diminish the value of the observations themselves; rather, it highlights the systemic and instructional norms that maintain English as the dominant medium of instruction in mainstream classrooms. Teachers expressed interest in integrating Arabic and shared thoughtful reflections about the complexities and possibilities of doing so. However, the observed lack of multilingual practices demonstrates the challenges of translating this interest into action within the current instructional context. This absence also underscores the broader implications of the systemic expectation that English remains the primary language of instruction, even in classrooms filled with multilingual students. The observed classrooms, unlike newcomer classrooms where the use of home languages is often expected, adhered strictly to monolingual practices. Ultimately, the lack of multilingual excerpts from observations illustrates a gap in mainstream classrooms: the systemic and instructional barriers that prevent the enactment of multilingual practices, even in linguistically rich environments. These findings emphasize the need for intentional efforts to equip teachers with the tools and confidence to implement multilingual practices effectively, supported by systemic structures that encourage such approaches in daily instruction. The contrast between teacher perspectives shared in interviews and the absence of observed multilingual practices in each of the classrooms underscores the importance of professional development, curricular adaptations, and systemic alignment—points that will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this study, I examined how district educators in Dearborn Public Schools view and implement multilingual language practices, particularly around Arabic, within a community that houses the highest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States. Drawing on Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA; García, 2017) and translanguaging pedagogy (García, 2009; García et al., 2016), I aimed to illuminate both the *stances* of educators regarding Arabic as an instructional resource and the pedagogical realities observed in the district's classrooms. Through data collection, encompassing interviews, observations, and a questionnaire, and analysis, I found that despite the district's strong commitment to celebrating Arab American cultural identity, no instances of teacher-initiated multilingual practices surfaced in the classroom observations. Teachers and administrators often spoke of Arabic's social value, yet, when it came to academic use, they tended to default to English monolingualism. Simultaneously, Dearborn has made remarkable progress over two decades—ranging from districtwide translation practices with student families, culturally sensitive gym policies, holiday recognitions, and hiring staff who reflect the Arab American community—underscoring that expanding the role of Arabic from social to academic domains is a logical next step rather than a radical shift.

Third Space in Practice: Dearborn Beyond Cultural Inclusion

Using Third Space (Bhabha, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), Dearborn can be conceptualized as a location where different cultural and linguistic identities converge to form new, hybrid forms of understanding. Outside the classroom, the city thrives as a Third Space with local shops, religious centers, and communal gatherings naturally integrating English and Arabic. Yet, within the classroom, I observed an absence of this multilingual potential. Teachers repeatedly named institutional constraints, monolingual curriculum norms, and test-driven outcomes as rationales

for preserving English dominance. However, Dearborn's integration of Arabic in so many other facets of school life underscores that this multilingual potential already exists and is just waiting to be tapped in classroom academic contexts. Despite the absence of pedagogical translanguaging, Dearborn Public Schools stands out for its extensive accommodations for Arab American families.

Over the past twenty years, the district has systematically translated every form of parental communication into Arabic, introduced Arabic as a course in many of its schools, adjusted gym class guidelines to respect modesty beliefs, added community specific holidays to its academic calendar, incorporated halal meal options in cafeterias, and increased the hiring of Arab American staff. These milestones, among many others, show that the district is far from mainstream U.S. public school standards in its approach to culture and language, and that it has consistently demonstrated a willingness to adapt policies based on community values. Each of these changes has further legitimized the presence of Arabic (and Arab culture) as integral to the district's ecology of multilingualism (García & Menken, 2015; García & Sánchez, 2015). However, while parents receive all their communication in Arabic and can thus engage more fully in their children's schooling, this study suggests students themselves may often move through their daily classes with little to no recognition of their home language.

This history of inclusive reform suggests that embedding Arabic into academic contexts is not out of place in Dearborn. On the contrary, it is the next logical step. Considering Dearborn as a Third Space, there is so much potential in merging the formal (English-centered academics) and the informal (Arabic usage and cultural knowledge) Dearborn domains into a new classroom culture. Teachers would no longer see English and Arabic as adversaries in the classroom, but as complementary languages fueling deeper engagement and more nuanced conversations (Deroo &

Ponzio, 2023). In this way, the content knowledge students acquire in ELA, for instance, might be enriched and extended through translanguaging pedagogies. While teachers might be concerned that mandated Arabic use could create barriers, translanguaging pedagogy and CMLA both emphasize that leveraging any portion of a student's home language, whether spoken dialect, partial script, or key words, can accelerate comprehension and cultural connection, rather than introducing additional hurdles (García & Wei, 2014; García, 2017). This *stance* aligns with Dearborn's broader trend of customizing district policy in response to the cultural norms of the community. If the district can adapt holidays, gym uniforms, and cafeteria menus for cultural alignment, it can likewise adapt its pedagogical approaches to value Arabic academically. Doing so would reinforce a principle that is already operative on the social plane: Arabic is a legitimate, respected language in Dearborn. By transferring that legitimacy to the academic plane, the district would close the gap between an appreciation of language diversity and its genuine enactment in classrooms.

Moreover, this emphasis on Arabic in the classroom is not an overly idealistic or merely symbolic endeavor—it directly responds to the everyday realities of Dearborn's community. Many students remain in Dearborn after graduation, actively contributing to the city's growth through local initiatives and community-based work. Their multilingual abilities are thus culturally invaluable, and the “Dearborn bubble” that some educators fear is exactly the environment where students will continue to live, work, and thrive in. By tapping into their existing linguistic backgrounds, educators not only amplify students' academic growth, but also support the continued development of Dearborn as a flourishing community. This aligns with Janks' (2010) assertion that literacy is not neutral; rather, it is deeply tied to power and access. In an ELA classroom, where students are actively engaging with texts, language, and discourse,

translanguaging pedagogy can disrupt traditional power hierarchies that privilege English over other languages. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between English and Arabic in everyday life allows teachers to leverage translanguaging pedagogies that bridge formal schooling with the broader linguistic ecosystem around them. Given that literacy development in schools directly influences students' future opportunities (Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014), the use of translanguaging pedagogy in ELA classrooms is particularly significant. By incorporating students' full linguistic repertoires, educators foster not only stronger literacy skills but also affirm students' identities within the academic space. As a result, this *stance* can strengthen the overall multilingual and multicultural ecology of the schools across the district.

Critical Multilingual Awareness in Teacher Training: Resisting Monolingual Constraints

Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA) highlights how power structures, institutional norms, and historical legacies frame schools as predominantly monolingual spaces (García, 2017). In Dearborn, educators' interviews revealed a universal endorsement of Arabic's cultural significance, but an ongoing uncertainty about how to use Arabic academically in ways that do not undermine English proficiency, standardized testing benchmarks, or curriculum pacing. Despite a pronounced pride in the local Arab American community, classroom teachers felt conflicted. On the one hand, they wanted to honor students' linguistic identities; on the other, they cited persistent institutional pressures for students to demonstrate academic success through English alone (Cummins, 2017; Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

CMLA encourages questioning these monolingual priorities. Rather than seeing Arabic as a barrier or an additional task, teachers can recognize how English's dominance is historically shaped and sustained by accountability policies that fail to measure linguistically diverse repertoires (García & Menken, 2010). Especially, as Gándara (2016) notes, many of these

accountability frameworks are structured around English monolingual norms, leaving students' multilingual resources underutilized or undervalued. This point is especially pertinent in Dearborn, where many students come from homes in which Arabic is spoken, yet may not be fully literate in formal Arabic scripts. District educator interviews showed that some students' Arabic skills are primarily oral or based on home-dialect proficiency, and their formal Arabic literacy remains limited. Notably, although some theoretical models predict total language loss by the third generation (Fishman, 1966), the vibrant community use of Arabic in Dearborn ensures that some oral proficiency is maintained, challenging this assumption. Thus, addressing CMLA means recognizing that encouraging Arabic in class is not about imposing a second language on students, but about acknowledging the broad spectrum of linguistic knowledge they bring.

For instance, in Pacheco et al.'s (2019) case study with third graders using Arabic, Spanish, and English resources, researchers found that even partial or emergent skills in Arabic could provide valuable scaffolding for students' English text comprehension, demonstrating the cognitive and cultural benefits of leveraging multilingual repertoires in everyday classroom tasks. If classroom teachers allow students to express ideas through whichever words come naturally, whether that is Arabic, English, or other dialectal forms, they create a more inclusive environment that fosters deeper engagement with complex content (García & Wei, 2014). Sometimes, this process involves embracing cultural shifts and making content connections that tap into students' lived experiences. For example, in Mrs. Baker's classroom excerpt from my findings, there was a potential opportunity to link the discussion about child labor in the cocoa industry to the BDS Movement for Palestine (Palestinian BDS National Committee, n.d.), an issue resonating deeply with many students in Dearborn and their broader community context.

By making this *shift*, Mrs. Baker could have drawn upon students' sociopolitical awareness and personal engagement, ultimately boosting both content comprehension and critical thinking.

Dearborn district educators' positive stance toward the Arab American community displays an infrastructure that can accommodate new forms of multilingual practice. However, capitalizing on these avenues requires explicit policy and professional development that equip teachers to question systemic norms (García & Menken, 2015; García & Sánchez, 2015). A broader acceptance of Arabic in academic discussions would not mandate that every student use Arabic, but would support those for whom it is a critical vehicle of thought to do so. Rather than assuming that students categorically do or do not need Arabic, this *shift* recognizes the spectrum of linguistic needs and preferences present in every classroom. By viewing language use as fluid and adaptive, educators validate the multiple ways students might access or benefit from Arabic, whether to clarify complex concepts, connect prior knowledge to new content, or simply engage more deeply in classroom dialogue. This inclusive mindset reflects a broader understanding that all learners possess dynamic linguistic repertoires, which can be utilized to enrich academic experiences rather than confined by narrow assumptions of who "needs" a particular language to succeed. This *shift* aligns with existing research indicating that multilingual expression aids metacognitive development and content comprehension (Daniel & Pacheco, 2015; Rowe & Miller, 2015).

Moreover, by embedding the teachings of CMLA in teacher education programs and professional development, the district can move away from seeing Arabic as an add-on. As García notes, CMLA is not restricted to specialized programs; rather, it functions as an act of language activism intended to reshape the social order of language use in schools (2017). By adopting a CMLA stance, Dearborn educators can move beyond the observed pattern of

embracing multilingualism primarily in social contexts while distrusting it for academic success. In doing so, they challenge the notion that English alone fosters serious learning or guarantees student achievement, recognizing instead that strategically incorporating Arabic within students' full linguistic repertoires can deepen and enrich their academic engagement. As such, teachers can begin to construct lessons that are inherently dynamic, inviting students to tap into whichever language resources they have whether or not they align with formal Arabic literacy. When anchored in CMLA, this approach would validate the diverse linguistic repertoires students already carry.

The CUNY-NYSIEB Project provides a foundation for how CMLA can be, “something that all schools, regardless of program type or school population, would be able to follow” (García & Menken, 2015, p. 97). Across this project, the researchers highlighted the importance of multilingual ecologies of schools and truly embracing translanguaging pedagogy as an instrument to teaching and learning (García & Menken, 2015; García & Sánchez, 2015). Multilingual ecologies of schools refer to multilingualism being valued in school communities (e.g. Dearborn's Arabic translation of all materials shared with student families). Findings from this study show that Dearborn has exhibited parts of a multilingual ecology consistent with García and Menken's (2015) depiction of schools that serve linguistically diverse communities. However, teachers have not yet systematically adopted translanguaging pedagogies in their instructional practices, which García and Sánchez (2015) identify as crucial for fully leveraging students' multilingual and multicultural skills. In short, while the ecological conditions for translanguaging pedagogy are present in Dearborn, classroom instruction has yet to incorporate opportunities for students to deploy their entire linguistic repertoires in academic tasks.

Implications for Translanguaging in Classrooms: From Recognition to Practice

In this study, while I use CMLA's ecology of multilingualism in schools to largely focus on macro-level perspectives and institutional norms, I consider translanguaging pedagogy to zoom in on micro-level practices for classroom teachers integrating students' diverse languages into daily instruction. Although translanguaging encompasses more than language and involves multimodal resources (e.g., visual artifacts, digital tools, gestures, and symbols), this study specifically examines how teachers and students utilize language-based pedagogical translanguaging in classroom settings. García et al. (2016) outline three key components of translanguaging pedagogy: a *stance* that sees all languages as unified resources, *design* that intentionally includes multilingual practices in lesson planning, and *shifts* that respond to students' immediate linguistic needs. In Dearborn, this study reveals a generally favorable *stance* toward Arabic. Many teachers recognized that students think, speak, and live partly in Arabic, though often in colloquial forms. However, no *designs* were observed in classrooms that incorporated structured multilingual activities, and no real-time *shifts* appeared in teacher-student interactions. All classroom conversations defaulted to English, either because teachers felt unprepared to manage multilingual dialogue or assumed that enabling Arabic would take away from the time students needed to practice English. For instance, teachers commonly perceived that students' academic success hinged on performing well on English-centric standardized assessments. Consequently, even if a teacher was personally open to integrating Arabic, they lacked institutional backing, guidelines, or exemplars for how to do so effectively.

As noted throughout this chapter, one subtlety that emerged from the data is that not all Arab American students in Dearborn exhibit strong formal literacy skills in Arabic. Some speak a colloquial dialect, but do not read or write Arabic fluently. Translanguaging, however, does not

require uniform or advanced skills in any given language; rather, it makes space for students to bring whatever linguistic knowledge they have (e.g., dialectal expressions, partial or emergent literacy, cultural references) into classroom discourse (García & Wei, 2014). Providing opportunities for them to switch or blend languages addresses the deeper goal of expanding conceptual understanding by engaging in the words (regardless of language) that students find most accessible for thinking, reasoning, and connecting to content. Teachers need reassurance that translanguaging pedagogy is not about forcing students to write an entire essay in formal Arabic if they do not wish or are not able to. Instead, these practices acknowledge how students sometimes grasp a new concept more fully through a key term or cultural reference in Arabic. In that sense, translanguaging pedagogy is not an imposition, but a liberating approach that honors the reality of linguistically diverse minds (Seltzer, 2019). Facilitating cultural connections and bridging content via multiple languages can, as research suggests, enrich the learning environment for all students (de Jong & Gao, 2022). Professional training and resources, such as the multiple CUNY-NYSIEB translanguaging guides (Celic & Seltzer, 2012; Hesson et al., 2014), could help teachers in Dearborn move from recognizing the community's multilingual richness to actively implementing translanguaging pedagogies.

This shift from recognition to implementation is supported by Abourehab and Azaz's (2023) study of a heritage Arabic school in the U.S., which documents how pedagogical translanguaging naturally emerged in classrooms despite an official Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)-only policy. In their research, teachers and adolescent learners strategically used English and various Arabic dialects (e.g., Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian) to negotiate meanings in MSA, build content knowledge, and assert linguistic identities. The teacher in that context did not strictly enforce the MSA-only policy, but instead created a safe space for dialectal expression,

which in turn fostered deeper engagement and conceptual learning. This kind of ideologically flexible pedagogy shows how pedagogical translanguageing can be both a linguistic scaffold and a tool of affirmation, providing a direct model for how Dearborn educators might respond to student needs in real-time, especially when Arabic-speaking students bring dialectal or partial knowledge to the classroom. By learning how to embed these strategies into lesson plans, classroom discussions, and student assignments, educators engage in the *shift* component of translanguageing pedagogy, making real-time adjustments to their teaching. In doing so, they *shift* from viewing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their students as obstacles to embracing them as assets that are essential tools to strengthen content learning and foster greater student engagement.

Additionally, Dearborn has the advantage of employing many Arabic-speaking staff, which could pave the way for co-taught lessons to support current non-Arabic-speaking classroom teachers to engage in ELA content through translanguageing pedagogy *designs* and *shifts*, supporting students to explore learning targets using whichever language resources resonate. The schools in this study ranged from having one- to two-thirds Arab and Arabic-speaking background educators, and while participating teachers reported classrooms with 90 percent or more Arab and Arabic-speaking background students, this high number of Arab background educators can serve as a valuable support system for their non-Arab colleagues. However, findings from this study also point to a complex dynamic: while district administrators and support staff often shared students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many of the classroom teachers did not. Mrs. Dania, for example, described Zayt School as having a majority of non-Arab classroom teachers, while the administrative and support staff were predominantly from Arab and Arabic-speaking backgrounds. This creates a layered dynamic in which Arabic-

speaking district educators may have deep cultural insight but still face institutional pressure to uphold English-dominant policies, while non-Arabic-speaking classroom teachers, often tasked with implementing these directives, may feel unequipped to incorporate students' home languages into daily instruction.

This disconnect highlights a broader challenge in multilingual education: policy-level decisions do not always reflect the lived experiences of multilingual students or align with the everyday realities of classroom teaching. While representation in district educators is meaningful, it is not always sufficient to drive systemic change, especially when they operate within frameworks that constrain their ability to act on their own cultural knowledge and values. Likewise, classroom teachers, regardless of their background, often need more support, tools, and permission to engage in translanguaging as a pedagogical practice. While Arabic-speaking educators are not necessary for translanguaging pedagogy in the classroom, all of the classroom teachers in this study had noted a lack of confidence or fear of positionality to engage in translanguaging pedagogy in their own classrooms. This aligns with Sleeter's (2008) argument that monolingual, white teachers often struggle to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse students, making intentional preparation and support essential. Teacher education programs, like Michigan State University's, have an opportunity where they could expand how they prepare future teachers to work in multilingual classrooms by offering more coursework, clinical placements, and partnership opportunities in linguistically rich communities like Dearborn.

The co-teaching model can support these teachers through application of translanguaging pedagogies, reflection of their experiences, and eventually, application of these strategies without an Arabic-speaking partner. For example, teachers could invite cultural stories connected to

students' everyday lives or heritage, then compare how the text reads or sounds in each language. Such strategies would support better concept formation and offer an authentic space for translanguaging pedagogy *shifts* (Pontier, 2022). Through these small, implementable steps, the district could begin normalizing the presence of Arabic in academic settings. For instance, teachers might reimagine a lesson on figurative language to include relevant Arabic idioms students have heard at home, prompting metalinguistic reflection on how metaphors work across languages. When teachers signal that these references are not only permissible, but intellectually valuable, students who may have felt reluctant to reveal their home language use might become more confident, ultimately enriching the discourse for everyone in the classroom. Ultimately, the progression of translanguaging pedagogy in the classroom has the potential of building the confidence of not only students in the classroom, but of their classroom teachers.

Broader Implications for U.S. Public Schools

Dearborn's trajectory demonstrates that institutional adaptations to respect cultural and linguistic diversity can happen and have happened within a U.S. public school system. Districts nationwide face similar tasks of serving communities that speak languages beyond English, and many have taken strides to provide translated materials or interpreter services for families. For example, in choosing their English Language Arts curriculum, Dearborn intentionally picked an option with Arabic translations to match its large Arabic-speaking student demographics.

Beyond curriculum adaptations, as shown throughout the findings (refer to **From District Design to Classroom Practices**), Dearborn has extended its inclusive efforts to show that deeper transformation is feasible. If a district can systematically shift so many of its policies to be inclusive of its community of students, it can also systematically integrate marginalized languages into its core academic practices. Such a vision demands a critical lens on

accountability structures, possibly exploring multilingual assessments or flexible rubrics that award credit for knowledge demonstrated in any language (Cummins, 2017). It also calls for teacher education programs to prepare candidates for the reality of multilingual and heritage speakers who might not demonstrate uniform proficiency in Arabic or English, but who can draw on a fluid repertoire to make sense of academic tasks (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Ultimately, public school districts across the country could benefit from a mindset shift, seeing multilingualism as an intellectual advantage rather than a challenge. Dearborn, with its rich history of incremental but pivotal changes, provides a potential blueprint for that shift.

In merging the insights of Critical Multilingual Awareness (CMLA) and translinguaging pedagogy, I have aimed to highlight how Dearborn Public Schools navigate their Third Space. While the district showcases a strong, evolving commitment to the Arab American community, English remains the near-exclusive language of academic instruction, with teachers feeling unprepared or restricted from integrating Arabic into daily learning. Though no specific multilingual classroom practices emerged in my observations, the district's history of culturally responsive changes underscores that elevating Arabic from a socially treasured language to an academically valued one is well within reach. Doing so does not necessitate forcing students into advanced Arabic literacy if they are not proficient; instead, it means honoring the range of linguistic resources they do have and creating a safe and affirming space for them to use these resources. By collectively shifting policies, assessment frameworks, and professional development to recognize Arabic as a legitimate tool, Dearborn can expand its Third Space into its classrooms that mirrors the cultural vibrancy already evident in the community.

Collaborations between local universities and the Dearborn Public School district can lead to certification pathways, endorsement programs, and sustained workshops that are designed

specifically for the local linguistic context. As mentioned earlier, resources like those from CUNY-NYSIEB (Celic & Seltzer, 2012; Hesson et al., 2014) could be used in planning meetings, coaching sessions, or teacher support groups to build confidence in enacting translanguaging pedagogies. In effect, the district would fully realize both CMLA's call to address systemic power hierarchies in language use and translanguaging's invitation to treat students' full linguistic backgrounds as part of their academic repertoires. Such a development would solidify Dearborn's role as a model for other linguistically diverse school districts. Rather than viewing multilingual instruction as "extra work" or "too radical," it would become the logical extension of the district's longstanding mission to serve and celebrate its Arab American community.

Future Directions: Methodological Considerations and Research Partnerships

This study drew on multiple methods (interviews, a teacher questionnaire, and teacher-recorded classroom observations) to build a layered understanding of district educators' beliefs and classroom practices around multilingualism. Using a multi-method design allowed me to explore both research questions: the first focused on educators' beliefs and perceived practices, and the second on how these beliefs were (or were not) reflected in classroom instruction. Interviews and questionnaire responses helped illustrate educators' perspectives, while classroom observations provided opportunities to examine instructional practices in action. Together, these data sources made it possible to compare what educators reported with what was observable in their teaching, offering a more complete picture than a single method would have allowed.

As an Arabic-speaking researcher who shares cultural and linguistic connections with many individuals in the Dearborn community, I was able to engage with educators from a place of shared understanding. This positionality supported deeper conversations around language,

identity, and classroom dynamics. However, since I was based in another state during data collection, I was not able to conduct classroom observations in person. Instead, each of the three classroom teachers participating in this portion of the study recorded and shared audiovisual footage of their teaching with me. While these recordings were valuable and provided important insights into classroom structures and language use, the nature of remote data collection came with some limitations. The short observation windows, combined with the lack of on-site presence, meant that I may have missed spontaneous moments, especially those involving translanguaging pedagogy *shifts*, that could occur over longer periods of classroom engagement. I note this because each of the classroom teachers mentioned during interviews that they occasionally made space for Arabic in informal ways. However, none of these *shifts* were documented during the recorded observations, which centered on formal classroom lessons. In a more ideal setting, longer in-person observations may have captured more naturally occurring translanguaging practices that teachers reported using infrequently but intentionally. For future research, extended in-person community and school engagement would offer important advantages, particularly when studying classroom language practices.

As I reflect on the findings of this study and the broader implications for multilingual education in Dearborn, future research must move beyond identifying gaps and instead focus on tangible, collaborative solutions. Dearborn has already shown a commitment to supporting its Arabic-speaking students in ways that extend beyond mere accommodation. The district has actively reshaped policies and practices to foster a more inclusive educational experience. However, as my study shows, there remains a disconnect between the social embrace of Arabic and its academic legitimacy in classroom spaces. Moving forward, research collaborations should not simply place additional expectations on teachers, but should work in partnership with

them, offering the necessary guidance, resources, and professional learning opportunities to make multilingual education sustainable. Recent work by scholars such as Tian and Lau (2023) highlights the value of teacher-researcher collaborations in developing context-specific translanguaging pedagogies that respond to the needs and realities of local classrooms. Their study in a Mandarin-English dual language classroom demonstrates how sustained, collaborative inquiry can support teachers in reimagining multilingual practices beyond prescriptive models. Similar approaches could inform future efforts in Dearborn.

As noted earlier, one avenue for future research is the development of co-teaching models that support translanguaging pedagogy without placing undue pressure on non-Arabic speaking teachers. Many educators in this study expressed a willingness to engage with multilingual practices, but lacked the confidence or training to do so effectively. Co-teaching offers a way for teachers to observe, learn, and participate in translanguaging pedagogy in real time, creating opportunities for monolingual educators to become more comfortable with multilingual pedagogies without needing to be fluent in Arabic themselves. A longitudinal research-practice partnership between district educators, university scholars, and community organizations could systematically investigate how co-teaching impacts both teacher confidence and student learning outcomes. Beyond co-teaching, is the intentional design of professional learning opportunities that center translanguaging pedagogy and CMLA as dynamic, evolving practices rather than fixed instructional techniques. However, such efforts may be constrained by the district's use of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP; Echevarría et al., 2004). While SIOP can provide valuable scaffolding strategies, its structured, prescriptive nature and focus on English language development may limit teachers' flexibility to engage with translanguaging pedagogy. Therefore, future research and professional learning could critically examine how instructional

models like SIOP may inadvertently restrict more community-rooted approaches to multilingual education.

The findings of this study suggest that while some teachers have an intuitive understanding of multilingualism's benefits, they often struggle with practical implementation. Future research could examine how districtwide professional development series can provide sustained, collaborative spaces for teachers to develop translanguaging pedagogies at a manageable pace. Unlike isolated workshops, these opportunities could allow educators to share experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and refine their approaches in dialogue with colleagues and researchers. Tian and Lau's (2023) findings also emphasize that such professional learning should be rooted in the lived experiences and expertise of local teachers, developed over time through iterative, collaborative reflection. This process would acknowledge that meaningful change in instructional practice takes time and that teachers need ongoing support to navigate the complexities of multilingual education.

Future research could also explore how community engagement can play a more active role in shaping multilingual education in Dearborn. While the district has made significant progress in fostering cultural inclusion, there is still potential to further integrate community expertise into classroom learning. Research could investigate how schools can develop sustainable models for partnering with families and community leaders to support multilingualism in ways that align with the lived linguistic realities of Dearborn students. For example, could Arabic-speaking parents or local community members participate in guest lectures, discussion panels, or mentorship programs to normalize the presence of Arabic in academic settings? Could research collaborations help design initiatives where students engage in projects that draw from both their school and home linguistic environments?

In addition to community partnerships, future research could more intentionally include student voices to gain deeper insight into how multilingual practices are experienced and enacted from the learner's perspective. This might involve conducting student interviews or focus groups, inviting students to keep language reflection journals, or analyzing student work that demonstrates translanguaging. Researchers could also explore participatory approaches (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) that position students as co-researchers—helping to design research questions, interpret findings, or even present their own language experiences. Including students in this way would not only enrich the research, but also affirm their agency and linguistic identities, allowing them to help shape the direction of multilingual education in their schools.

Longitudinal (Menard, 2008) and ethnographic studies (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) would be especially valuable in this area, as they could trace how relationships between schools, families, and communities develop over time, and how these partnerships influence students' language use, learning outcomes, and sense of belonging. Ethnographic approaches (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007), in particular, would offer the opportunity to observe and document translanguaging as more than just language choice, it would allow for a deeper exploration of translanguaging as a social, cultural, and political practice. By spending extended time within classrooms and community spaces, researchers could attend to how students and teachers use language to make meaning, negotiate identity, build relationships, and navigate institutional power structures. This kind of approach could capture the everyday, dynamic ways multilingualism shapes teaching and learning in Dearborn, including practices that may go unnoticed in short-term studies. Ethnography would also make space to understand how language intersects with race, religion, and community histories, offering a more holistic view of translanguaging as lived experience.

This future research can also critically examine the broader ideological and political dimensions of multilingual education. While the scholarship that shaped this study provided essential frameworks for understanding translanguaging pedagogy and CMLA, there is room for a more explicit integration of anti-imperialist perspectives. Considering Allweiss and Al-Adeimi (2024), addressing *imperial evasion*—or the process of denying imperialism and its effects—in schooling is crucial for ensuring that justice-oriented pedagogies not only support multilingualism, but also engage directly with the sociopolitical realities of communities like Dearborn. Given the city’s deep ties to colonialism and migration, further exploration of how anti-imperialist frameworks intersect with translanguaging pedagogy and CMLA could provide a more critical and comprehensive understanding of language education in similar contexts. This would involve questioning not only how Arabic is treated within classrooms, but also how broader systemic forces shape language policies, educational priorities, and community agency.

Ultimately, the future of multilingual education in Dearborn must be guided by research that is collaborative, context-driven, and deeply attuned to the realities of district educators and students. Rather than simply recommending more training or curricular shifts, future studies should work alongside educators to co-develop strategies that feel both meaningful and feasible within the existing structures of the district. Co-teaching, professional development opportunities, and community partnerships are just a few examples of the kinds of initiatives that could emerge from sustained collaboration. More broadly, research must continue to interrogate the power structures that determine which languages are valued in academic spaces and how those values can be transformed. To embody this commitment to collaborative and reciprocal research, I have begun sharing my findings with study participants. I invited each teacher I observed to meet with me individually to discuss insights from this dissertation, and I plan to

continue scheduling one-on-one conversations with the other six district educators who participated in interviews. I hope to share with each person not only what I learned, but to also hear their reflections and responses to the data collected. This dialogic process reflects the belief that knowledge production should not be extractive, but rooted in mutual learning and ongoing relationships. Given this context and Dearborn's remarkable progress in fostering a supportive environment for Arabic-speaking students, there is every reason to believe that further strides in academic multilingualism are not only possible, but are inevitable.

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APPENDIX A: DISTRICT EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

Part One: Identity and Community Role

1. Introductions/Introduce Self
2. What language(s) do you communicate with at home?
3. Of the language(s) listed above, what is the most used language at home?
4. When did you learn English? (If English is your first language, please indicate so)
5. Were you born in the United States? If so, did you grow up in United States as well?
6. *(Depending on previous answer)* Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
What made you leave?
7. Do you identify as part of the Arab community in the US? In Dearborn, Michigan?
8. What are your connections to Dearborn, Michigan and the community here?
9. How would you describe the community and space in Dearborn, Michigan?
10. What is your role as a member in the community you exist in?
11. How has your self-identification been shaped by your environment?
12. What is your relationship to the Arabic language? (i.e. home, school, religious, social, etc.)

Part Two: Professional Role and District Insights

13. What is your role as [insert role]?
14. How do you view SIOP in your district's classrooms? (SIOP Coordinator only)
15. What are your perspectives on English-only classrooms?
16. Based on your knowledge of the students in your classroom [and/or district], how would you classify their ability to succeed in the classroom?

17. How well do you know your students' [district and/or classroom] linguistic backgrounds?
18. Have you noticed any language "barriers" between the students and yourself?
19. How do you account for linguistic diversity in your classroom/district?
20. What does differentiation mean to you?
21. Given Dearborn, Michigan has the highest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States, what are your views on Arabic in the Dearborn Public Schools?
 - a. Context: Arabic as a foreign language
 - b. Context: Arabic across content areas (i.e. Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies)
22. In what ways has your school district supported (or not) the use of Arabic?
 - a. How has this influenced your own views and practices in your role as a [insert role]?

APPENDIX B: MULTITEACH QUESTIONNAIRE

Table B1

MULTITEACH Questionnaire (Modification shown in bold)

Section 1. Language learning background: this section contains questions about your language background. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your thoughts and experiences. You can change the language at any time (look for the options at the bottom of each page).³

1. What is your mother tongue? If you think you have more than one mother tongue, please list them below as well.
2. What languages do you speak in your free time? Please list them below.
3. What languages do you feel you can express yourself freely in? Please list them below.
4. Which languages, if any, did you study in school and university? Please list them in the appropriate boxes below.
 - 4.1. School
 - 4.2. University
5. Have you studied or are you studying any languages on your own? If yes, please list them in the corresponding spaces below and describe how you primarily studied them or are studying them (e.g. online, self-study manual, etc.).
 - 5.1. Previously learned languages
 - 5.2. Currently learning

Section 2. Language teaching background: this section contains questions about your language teaching background.

6. How long have you been a language teacher? (Options: Less than a year, 1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-9 years, 10 years or over)
 7. Select the language(s) you are currently teaching. (Options: **Arabic**, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese)
 8. Do you use (Lx) outside of school hours? (Options: Less than once a month, Once a month, Once every two weeks, Once a week, More than once a week but not daily, Daily)
 9. Have you taught any other languages? If yes, please list them (and the context) below.
-

³ Instructions are based on the questionnaire being an online form.

Table B1 (cont'd)

Section 3. Beliefs about language learning and teaching: this section contains questions about your beliefs regarding language learning and teaching.

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree) Learning multiple languages significantly improves one's intercultural competence.
- 10.1. It is possible to learn to speak, read and write in several foreign languages fluently.
- 10.2. Learning multiple languages improves one's cognitive skills.
- 10.3. Learning multiple foreign languages simultaneously can hinder the language learning process.
- 10.4. Learning multiple languages can improve performance in Science, Math and Technology subjects.
- 10.5. The presence of many foreign languages in a country can reduce the importance of national languages and associated cultures.
11. Would you prefer a native speaker or non-native speaker teacher when learning a new language (all else being equal, e.g. qualifications, etc.)? Why?
12. Parents promote their children's learning of multiple languages where I live. (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)
13. The government promotes the learning of multiple languages where I live by... (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)
- 13.1. ...providing sufficient time for language instruction in school
- 13.2. ...organizing campaigns that promote language learning
- 13.3. ...investing money in language teacher education
- 13.4. ...investing money in language materials
14. How much do you agree with the following statements? (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)
- 14.1. It is better to learn one language at a time.
- 14.2. Students who speak several languages can serve as linguistic role models for other learners.
- 14.3. Using languages other than the target language in lessons can cause confusion in students.
- 14.4. Knowing multiple languages makes it easier to learn additional languages.
- 14.5. One learns more effectively if only the target language is used during lessons.
- 14.6. Learning additional languages improves knowledge of previously learned languages.
15. How easy do you find teaching the following in (Lx)? (Options: Very Difficult, Difficult, Somewhat Difficult, Somewhat Easy, Easy, Very Easy)
- 15.1. Grammar
- 15.2. Vocabulary
- 15.3. Listening skills
- 15.4. Reading skills
- 15.5. Writing skills
-

Table B1 (cont'd)

- 15.6. Speaking skills
 - 15.7. Cultural knowledge
 - 15.8. Pronunciation
 - 15.9. Language use in context (Pragmatics)
 - 16. The more languages teachers know, the better they can... (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)
 - 16.1. ...explain language structure
 - 16.2. ...identify the language-related challenges learners face
 - 16.3. ...use more appropriate teaching methods/approaches
 - 16.4. ...increase their repertoire of activities
 - 16.5. ...develop learners' intercultural competence
 - 16.6. ...inspire students to learn languages
 - 17. I am aware of all the languages each of my students can make themselves understood in. (Options: I don't know this about any student, I know this about some students (25% of them), I know this about quite a few students (50% of them), I know this about many students (75% of them), I know this about all my students)
-
- Section 4. Teaching methods and activities: this section contains questions about teaching methods and activities.
- 18. How often do you do the following during a typical month when teaching (Lx)? (Options: Never, Once, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Every lesson)
 - 18.1. I focus on explaining the structure of the language.
 - 18.2. I focus on practicing communication and teaching language structure more implicitly.
 - 18.3. I encourage students to translate from the target language during pair/group work.
 - 18.4. I try to incorporate the other languages my students know or are learning into lessons.
 - 18.5. I try to learn the other languages my students know and use these in my lessons.
 - 18.6. I encourage students to use the other languages they know or are learning during lessons.
 - 18.7. I like to point out similarities and differences in the target language and the other languages my students and I know or are learning.
 - 18.8. I give my students advice on how to understand certain concepts in the target language by relating them to the languages my students know or are learning.
 - 18.9. I combine reading/listening activities in other languages that students know with speaking/writing activities in the target language.
 - 18.10. I combine speaking/writing activities in other languages that students know with reading/listening activities in the target language.
 - 19. How often do you do the following during a typical month? (Options: Never, Once, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Every lesson)
 - 19.1. I provide spaces where students and teachers can post content in different languages.
 - 19.2. I display students' foreign language works in classrooms or elsewhere.
-

Table B1 (cont'd)

- 19.3. My students each have a language diary where they write their thoughts regarding the languages they are learning or are interested in.
- 19.4. I encourage my students to write texts using a combination of all the languages they already know or are learning.
20. Have you initiated any activities involving the use of two or more languages at your school? If yes, could you describe them briefly?
21. Has your school initiated any activities involving the use of two or more languages? If yes, could you describe them briefly?

Section 5. Biographical information: this section questions about your age group and gender.

22. What is your gender? Choose an option (Options: Male, Female, prefer not to say)

23. Choose the age group you belong to. (Options: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69)

APPENDIX C: MULTITEACH QUESTIONNAIRE: SELECTED RESPONSES

Table C1

MULTITEACH Questionnaire: Selected Teacher Responses⁴

Section 3. Beliefs about language learning and teaching: this section contains questions about your beliefs regarding language learning and teaching. (Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)			
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Mrs. Clark	Mr. Hall	Mrs. Baker
Learning multiple languages significantly improves one's intercultural competence.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is possible to learn to speak, read and write in several foreign languages fluently.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Learning multiple languages improves one's cognitive skills.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Learning multiple foreign languages simultaneously can hinder the language learning process.	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Agree	Not sure; not experienced here.
Learning multiple languages can improve performance in Science, Math and Technology subjects.	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
The presence of many foreign languages in a country can reduce the importance of national languages and associated cultures.	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Would you prefer a native speaker or non-native speaker teacher when learning a new language (all else being equal, e.g. qualifications, etc.)? Why?	Native. The language use may be more authentic.	Native speaker they know the slang phrases, and know how the language works in their culture.	There are advantages/disadvantages to each. A non-native speaker could give strategies on how they learned; native speaker has more inflection, context, etc.

⁴ Refer to **Appendix B** for full questionnaire.

Table C1 (cont'd)

Parents promote their children's learning of multiple languages where I live.	Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree
The government promotes the learning of multiple languages where I live by...			
...providing sufficient time for language instruction in school	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
...organizing campaigns that promote language learning	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
...investing money in language teacher education	Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree
...investing money in language materials	Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree
It is better to learn one language at a time.	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Agree	Not sure; early learning affects language acquisition.
Students who speak several languages can serve as linguistic role models for other learners.	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Using languages other than the target language in lessons can cause confusion in students.	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree
Knowing multiple languages makes it easier to learn additional languages.	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
One learns more effectively if only the target language is used during lessons.	Disagree	Agree	Not sure
Learning additional languages improves knowledge of previously learned languages.	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
How easy do you find teaching the following in (Lx)? (Options: Very Difficult, Difficult, Somewhat Difficult, Somewhat Easy, Easy, Very Easy)			
1.1. Grammar	Easy	S. Difficult	Very Easy

Table C1 (cont'd)

1.2. Vocabulary	Easy	S. Difficult	Very Easy
1.3. Listening skills	Easy	Easy	Difficult
1.4. Reading skills	S. Easy	S. Easy	Easy
1.5. Writing skills	S. Difficult	S. Difficult	Difficult
1.6. Speaking skills	Easy	S. Easy	S. Easy
1.7. Cultural knowledge	Easy	Difficult	Easy
1.8. Pronunciation	Easy	Easy	S. Easy
1.9. Language use in context (Pragmatics)	Easy	S. Difficult	Easy
The more languages teachers know, the better they can...			
...explain language structure	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...identify the language-related challenges learners face	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...use more appropriate teaching methods/approaches	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...increase their repertoire of activities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...develop learners' intercultural competence	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...inspire students to learn languages	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of all the languages each of my students can make themselves understood in. (Options: I don't know this about any student, I know this about some students (25% of them), I know this about quite a few students (50% of them), I know this about many students (75% of them), I know this about all my students)	I know this about many students (75% of them)	I know this about all my students.	I know this about many students (75% of them)
Section 4. Teaching methods and activities: this section contains questions about teaching methods and activities. How often do you do the following during a typical month when teaching (Lx)? (Options: Never, Once Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Every Lesson)			

Table C1 (cont'd)

How often do you do the following during a typical month when teaching (Lx)?	Mrs. Clark	Mr. Hall	Mrs. Baker
I focus on explaining the structure of the language.	Often	Sometimes	Often
I focus on practicing communication and teaching language structure more implicitly.	Often	Often	Sometimes
I encourage students to translate from the target language during pair/group work.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes
I try to incorporate the other languages my students know or are learning into lessons.	Rarely	Once	Rarely
I try to learn the other languages my students know and use these in my lessons.	Rarely	Sometimes	Sometimes
I encourage students to use the other languages they know or are learning during lessons.	Rarely	Once	Rarely
I like to point out similarities and differences in the target language and the other languages my students and I know or are learning.	Every Lesson	Once	Often (Syntax)
I give my students advice on how to understand certain concepts in the target language by relating them to the languages my students know or are learning.	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
I combine reading/listening activities in other languages that students know with	Never	Once	Rarely

Table C1 (cont'd)

speaking/writing activities in the target language.			
I combine speaking/writing activities in other languages that students know with reading/listening activities in the target language.	Never	Never	Rarely
How often do you do the following during a typical month?			
I provide spaces where students and teachers can post content in different languages.	Never	Never	Sometimes
I display students' foreign language works in classrooms or elsewhere.	Never	Never	Never
My students each have a language diary where they write their thoughts regarding the languages they are learning or are interested in.	Never	Never	Never
I encourage my students to write texts using a combination of all the languages they already know or are learning.	Rarely	Never	Never
Have you initiated any activities involving the use of two or more languages at your school? If yes, could you describe them briefly?	No.	No.	(blank)
Has your school initiated any activities involving the use of two or more languages? If yes, could you describe them briefly?	Many activities embrace my students' bilingual abilities.	No.	(blank)