As of fall 2018, the United States had 5 million English language learners (ELLs) in the public K–12 education system (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Within this population, ELL students in Indiana number over 50,000, or 5.9% of all public K–12 students in the state. Dual-language bilingual education (DLBE) programs often neglect the strategy of translanguaging in the classroom, disadvantaging ELLs. Translanguaging is defined as drawing “on all the linguistic resources of the child to maximize understanding and achievement” and is demonstrated in the natural switching of languages in bilinguals (Lewis et al., 2012). Further, translanguaging attempts to correct past English-only ideals for the equity of ELL students. This case study aims to answer two questions: (1) What are the translanguaging views and practices of elementary school teachers in DLBE classrooms? (2) Are there differences in translanguaging views and practices between bilingual native Spanish speakers, bilingual native English speakers, and nonbilingual native English speakers? Data was collected from the course data of seven elementary school teachers who are part of DLBE programs in two schools in Indiana to better determine the correlation between DLBE teachers’ linguistic backgrounds and their views and practices of translanguaging in their classrooms. Results found a connection between teachers’ own bilingualism and an increased use of translanguaging practices in their classrooms, which can help offset decades of inequity between English language learning students and their monolingual peers.

Keywords
bilingual education, dual-language bilingual education, English as a second language, translanguaging, English language learners, social justice
America has long prided itself on being a melting pot, serving as one of the more linguistically and ethnically diverse countries in the world and seeing a sizeable share of the world’s immigrant population each year. With a long record of serving as an immigration destination and no official language, the United States boasts large numbers of non-native English speakers. As of the fall of 2018, the most recent year for which data is available, the United States held 5 million English language learners (ELLs) within the public K–12 education system (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Yet the United States has had a tumultuous past in educating the children of immigrants in a positive way that allows them to learn English and maintain a connection to their native tongue. With an educational history favoring assimilation to the de facto official language, transitioning bilingual education in the United States to a system that celebrates diversity and rectifies the mistakes of the past is of increasing significance. As more ELL students enter the United States’ public education system each year and social justice comes under ever-tightening societal scrutiny, emphasizing equity within classrooms to reduce postgraduation inequality is critical. Moreover, ELL students “typically begin school with lower achievement than their non-ELL peers, and those achievement gaps often close slowly if at all” (Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Bilingual education strategies that avoid punishing ELL students for speaking their native language and provide a more organic learning environment for all students have become more widely adopted within the United States. Translanguaging, defined as drawing “on all the linguistic resources of the child to maximize understanding and achievement” (Lewis et al., 2012), is a bilingual education practice that benefits both the monolingual and bilingual students while being able to improve equity and achievement in ELL students (Baker & Wright, 2021). It benefits monolinguals by exposing them to more organic and colloquial language used by bilinguals, while bilingual students themselves are able to communicate and express themselves more accurately. In practice in dual-language bilingual education (DLBE) classrooms, translanguaging can look like encouraging students to read bilingual books, developing class cognate posters or word walls, and permitting students to use their complete linguistic repertoire; for example, allowing them to switch naturally between their languages without penalty.

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Mentor

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These newer bilingual educational practices, such as translinguaging, reevaluate which students benefit from bilingual education and are critical to reducing the achievement gap between bilingual and monolingual students. Reexamining who benefits and who is left out of mainstream public education has identified how ELL students have been historically disadvantaged. By allowing ELL students the freedom to utilize their linguistic repertoire, they can draw upon the knowledge they have already learned, simply in a different language. Utilizing strategies that benefit bilingual students in this way does not “even the playing field,” so to speak, but...
rather lets ELL students onto the same playing field monolingual English-speaking students have had access to for centuries.

Within the fall 2018 population context of 5 million K–12 students in the United States identified as ELLs, conservative figures put the population of ELLs in Indiana as numbering over 50,000, or 5.9% of all public K–12 students in the state (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). From 2000 to 2019, the number of foreign-born ELLs who are not English proficient has risen by 77.2%, indicating a growing demand for a public bilingual education that is equipped to support ELL students (Migration Policy Institute, 2021). Despite this need, the achievement gap between bilingual and monolingual students remains evident. As of 2017, ELL students in Indiana across all grade levels, averaged out, achieved a 28.8% pass rate in English language arts (ELA) and a 26.1% pass rate in math; contrarily, native English-speaking students achieved a 66.8% pass rate in ELA and a 60% pass rate in math (Morita-Mullaney & Albrecht, 2017). What these statistics reveal is that ELL students are succeeding at less than half the rate of their monolingual peers. In Indiana, this demonstrates a critical need to reevaluate teaching practices that have continued to neglect bilingual students. Reactive strategies to assist struggling students should not be the primary intervention method, but rather a support if proactive strategies, such as implementing translanguaging, are not working.

Supporting ELL students should be an educational priority to compensate for centuries of educational policies seeking to remove their linguistic background that have continued to disadvantage ELL students even after graduation. Until the latter half of the 20th century, students who were not fluently proficient in English could not only be punished for speaking their mother language but were disproportionately placed in special education classrooms for their lack of English comprehension. Due to ELL students requiring approximately 7 to 10 years to become proficient in English, “in many cases [they] are misdiagnosed as having a learning disability” (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013). Equal educational materials provided to ELL students were in English, as they were “equal” to what monolingual students had received. It wasn't until the 1974 Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* that ELL students were afforded equitable educational opportunities rather than equal ones.

This, along with historically assimilation-focused bilingual education that sought to erase students’ knowledge of languages other than English, has contributed to an achievement gap between monolingual English-speaking students and bilingual students in the United States. The achievement gap while in the public education system can also plague students after graduation; if students are failing in their academics, they are unlikely to find postgraduation professional success. For students who are disadvantaged, “low achievement has a wide-reaching effect including higher dropout rates, incarceration, poor health, substance abuse, poverty, and more” (Kamm, 2018). As many ELL students in the United States are students of color and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, this achievement gap can in turn reinforce stereotypes and exacerbate already present societal inequalities.

This case study summarily aims to answer two questions: (1) What are the translanguaging views and practices of elementary school teachers in DLBE classrooms? (2) Are there differences in translanguaging views and practices between bilingual native Spanish-speaking teachers, bilingual native English-speaking teachers, and nonbilingual native English-speaking teachers? Past research has not previously focused on the differences in translanguaging views and practices between teachers of different levels of language ability, which can shape the priorities of teacher training and professional development in the future. Having a greater understanding of how different factors in educators influence their classrooms will provide opportunities for improvement in bilingual education over the course of future research.

To answer the central research questions, data was collected from a cohort of seven elementary school teachers, who are part of two-way DLBE programs in two schools from separate school districts in Indiana (see Table 1). Some teachers managed only the English instruction portion of their class, some only taught for the Spanish portion, and some taught in both Spanish and English. Mrs. Oliver (teachers’ names have been changed for privacy) was the only native English-speaking bilingual teacher, while teachers Mrs. Lopez and Ms. Martinez are both native Spanish-speaking.
teachers completed two eight-week courses asynchronously on Brightspace in the fall 2020 semester. For the first half of the semester, participants took EDCI 591: Foundations of Bilingual Education and continued with EDCI 591: Methods of Bilingual Education to conclude the semester. Each course tracked participation and graded teachers through participation in assignments and discussion boards on Brightspace in addition to audio discussion boards captured on VoiceThread. Data was sourced through class submissions from a total of 7 homework assignments, 25 discussion boards, and 22 VoiceThread prompts.

Through these participation methods, the number of mentions of translanguaging and related practices, such as metalinguistic awareness and bridging, were coded and tabulated. Coding was performed manually after importing data into NVivo 12 for teams for organization and analysis. A translanguaging “instance” refers to a switch in language (word, phrase, or longer dialogue) that is sufficiently separated in occurrence by either bilingual teachers. All other educators are monolingual English-speaking teachers.

These teachers were formerly part of Purdue University’s ELL licensure program and the new DLBE Graduate Certificate Program. As part of the training program, bilingual teachers. All other educators are monolingual English-speaking teachers.

TABLE 1. Participating DLBE Bilingual Teachers, Fall 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School District***</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Language of Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Oliver**</td>
<td>Silton</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Cook</td>
<td>Silton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Lopez*</td>
<td>Newberry</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Long</td>
<td>Newberry</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Martinez*</td>
<td>Newberry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Gearhart</td>
<td>Newberry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. White</td>
<td>Newberry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes native bilingual speaker.  
**Denotes nonnative bilingual speaker.  
***Pseudonyms.

FIGURE 2. Ms. Martinez uses displays to help teach her class about auxiliary verbs in Spanish.
From Table 2, it is evident in this case study that a bilingual background, regardless of being a native English- or Spanish-speaker, correlates to a comparably higher frequency of translanguaging references. A higher frequency of translanguaging references implies the teacher is intentionally utilizing translanguaging strategies and activities in their classroom or is otherwise endorsing and supporting students’ use of both English and Spanish. For both monolingual and bilingual students, this benefits their acquisition of their time or space, lasting from a few seconds up to a few minutes. The instances of translanguaging and related practices included teachers’ own use of translanguaging in their lives, how they applied translanguaging in their classrooms, or how they hoped or strategized to incorporate the practice in the future. Instances were further analyzed by when in the school day the translanguaging occurred (i.e., during class time designated for English speaking or class time designated for Spanish speaking).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Discussion Board</th>
<th>VoiceThread</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Lopez*</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Martinez*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Oliver**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Cook</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Long</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Gearhart</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes native bilingual speaker.
**Denotes nonnative bilingual speaker.
non-native language, but for bilingual students, this equalizes their educational experience. Mrs. Lopez referenced translanguaging and relevant concepts a total of 32 times across the two fall 2020 courses, while the other two bilingual teachers, Ms. Martinez and Mrs. Oliver, referenced translanguaging 26 and 24 times, respectively. While being bilingual is correlated to a greater reference rate, it is not a limitation for monolingual teachers, as some, like Mrs. Cook, referenced translanguaging as many times as Mrs. Oliver, who is bilingual and teaches bi-lingually.

Bilingual teachers overall tended to draw more from their personal experiences, while their monolingual equivalents more often reflected upon how they could incorporate translanguaging into their classrooms. The bilingual teachers, Mrs. Oliver, Ms. Martinez, and Mrs. Lopez, were able to analyze their students’ translanguaging more effectively than the teachers who only spoke English, which allowed them to evaluate their in-place translanguaging strategies and create new ones with relative ease. Their personal understandings of being bilingual and utilizing both Spanish and English on a regular basis allowed them to navigate the concept, whereas teachers who could only speak English encountered more difficulties, such as not being able to identify cognates between languages. This meant English-only teachers like Mrs. Cook and Ms. White would often brainstorm what intentional translanguaging or positive attitudes toward translanguaging could look like in their classrooms. Unlike the bilingual teachers, few had classroom policies or instruction that already included translanguaging and related concepts before participating in the Purdue courses.

From the results of this case study’s examination of a cohort of seven teachers, a conclusion drawn is that the personal experiences of the bilingual Indiana elementary DLBE teachers greatly shape and influence their views and uses of translanguaging, which is to the betterment of both monolingual and bilingual students. While it could be said that having all DLBE teachers be bilingual would be of great benefit to both their monolingual and bilingual students, it is not a feasible reality in an industry of teachers already stretched too thin. Monolingual teachers adopted the concept of translanguaging at similar rates as their bilingual peers, simply at different stages of comprehension and application in their classrooms.

Of particular importance to the results of this case study is how utilizing translanguaging strategies and having a positive view of translanguaging promotes a more inclusive and successful environment for ELL students that decreases the achievement gap between them and their monolingual peers. Moreover, this connection between teachers’ abilities to speak another language and their frequency of translanguaging instances holds “the potential for translanguaging to disrupt monolingual ideologies,” further improving educational equity (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). With the monolingual teachers in this case study also being properly educated on the foundations and methodologies of translanguaging, they are also contributing to the reduction of the achievement gap. Rectifying the monolingual-centric approach of past bilingual education to improve classroom equity that follows students after graduation is crucial to reducing social inequality present in other aspects of society.

Original plans for the study included analyzing classroom observation videos conducted over the 2020–2021 school year of the seven teachers in the case study. A significant note during the period when teacher data was collected was the global onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the severity of the virus’s spread, a number of changes were made to in-person instruction that affected the frequency of translanguaging in case study data, which led to this case study being focused on content collected during the fall 2020 semester. Teachers reported being hampered by virtual instruction and pressure by administrators for more focus on English time to make up for lower standardized test scores. A lack of both time and resources once teachers were instructing in person again left teachers from this case study’s cohort unable to implement intentional translanguaging strategies, or for teachers who only taught the English section, unable to plan bridging lessons with their Spanish-teaching counterpart.

A limitation of this case study is the population size of the chosen cohort of DLBE teachers. It is hard to speak to the greater generalizability of the impacts of this study even within the state of Indiana, as data was only collected from 2 of the state’s 19 school districts with dual language programs (Indiana Department of Education, 2022). Additionally, not every teacher in the case study participated equally; specifically, VoiceThread
participation was not as strictly evaluated by the course professor as other means of course participation, such as Brightspace discussion boards. While the original intention was to utilize VoiceThread discussions each week, after the second EDCI 591 8-week course, only 8 of a total possible 16 prompts were posted and utilized.

Going forward, future directions for this project would examine professional development and training strategies with the aim of increasing monolingual teachers’ comprehension and use of translanguaging in their classrooms. Further studies to determine correlation between DLBE teachers’ linguistic background and their views and practices of translanguaging should be done on different scales to reach more generalizable conclusions. Longitudinal studies of students, both monolingual and bilingual, could provide a more precise insight into how the use of translanguaging in bilingual education benefits students, which would then be able to influence teacher education and training.

To achieve more inclusive and equitable education for all, “bilingual students must be allowed to build on their translanguaging practices, their peers must be engaged in translanguaging discourses, and teachers must value translanguaging and build on those flexible practices” (García & Leiva, 2013). The first step toward creating an educational environment that provides for these conditions is for DLBE teachers to be informed and educated on translanguaging and related best practices in bilingual education; incorporating translanguaging without planning or understanding how to implement it effectively can work to the detriment of bilingual students, just as proper use of translanguaging can benefit them. Understanding the relationship between DLBE teachers’ linguistic backgrounds and their views and practices of translanguaging is important to ascertain strategies and practices to better achieve classroom equity and reduce the achievement gap between bilingual and monolingual students.

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