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Influence of Translanguaging Interventions on Writing in Elementary Immersion

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**Influence of Translanguaging Interventions on Writing in Elementary
Immersion**

An Action Research Report

By

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Influence of Translanguaging on Writing in Immersion

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of structured translanguaging on student writing production and use of adjectives. Twenty-eight students aged 8-9 in a Spanish immersion elementary school each produced three narrative writing samples, one in English and two in Spanish. Each of these writing samples was preceded by its own set of introductory activities including completion of a prewriting document in which students were required to use English for Sample 1, Spanish for Sample 2, and encouraged to use both languages for Sample 3. Narrative writing samples were used to gain a word count and adjective count in Sample 2 and 3. Prewriting documents were used to collect English words that students chose to translate into Spanish for Sample 3. Performance on Sample 2 and Sample 3 were generally similar, with a slight word count and adjective count decrease and a slight increase in ratio of adjective to overall word count. The impact of the intervention was generally not influential on word count and adjective count. Overall, analysis of behavioral logs revealed that most students did not engage in using the prewriting document and analysis of English words collected from the prewriting document revealed that students chose to translanguage nouns more than adjectives. Outcomes revealed that students' descriptive writing was not hindered by language barriers and that students need more direct instruction with sentence structure and adjectives.

Keywords: translanguaging, translingual writing, immersion education, writing proficiency

The written products of students are heavily influenced by their experiences. Perspective, description, and vocabulary are all influenced by student knowledge; one cannot describe what one hasn't learned or experienced. On a similar note, one can struggle to describe to readers if the language being used is not the language in which the experience was coded.

Use of translanguaging in the classroom has shown to have educational benefits, capitalizing on the fact that many students may not be able to engage with content in the classroom due to a barrier based on lack of proficiency in the language of the classroom or perceived lack of acceptance in the classroom due to one's own identity as a language speaker (Kiramba, 2017; Martínez-Alvarez, 2017; Velasco & García, 2014). If the language of the classroom doesn't reflect the language of students' experiences, they may struggle to participate and fully express themselves. On an emotional level, students may feel that their experiences aren't accepted or valid in their educational setting (Dorner & Layton, 2014). On a practical level, students may lack the vocabulary necessary to fully describe what they wish to share (Kiramba, 2017; Martínez-Alvarez, 2017; Velasco & García, 2014). When this barrier continues to exist, students will continue to struggle to express themselves in writing, sometimes failing to transfer writing abilities that come naturally to them in one language into another.

Students learning in a bilingual setting are often overheard engaging in the act of translanguaging, moving fluidly between their L1¹ and L2² or substituting words in one language for another when a gap in their knowledge prevents them from communicating as effectively as they wish to. Some educators and researchers would say that they are guilty of this action. Others

¹ A language learner's L1 refers to their native language.

² A language learner's L2 refers to the target language that they are in the process of learning.

would say that it is a natural part of the learning process (Moll, Saéz & Dworin, 2001; Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011).

While translanguaging has been recorded as a tool in the language classroom since the mid 1900s, there is a gap in knowledge of its ability to influence students writing in their (Williams, 1996). Over the years, the act of translanguaging, or code-switching, has come to be accepted as a natural, often observed phenomenon, in children as well as adults as humans attempt to communicate in a language they are still in the process of learning. Some research has been conducted about instances of verbal translanguaging providing learning opportunities in the language classroom, but little research exists regarding the use of multiple languages in the writing process. In addition to this, most research focuses on early literacy skills occurring in primary grades such as kindergarten rather than on writing skills for older students who are in the process of writing full descriptive narratives. Therefore, the purpose of this action research study is to explore how translanguaging could be leveraged to improve student ability in a third grade Spanish immersion classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Language Acquisition Theory, according to Chomsky (1965), argues that language learning is an innate structure or function of the human brain. As children, specifically, engage in the language learning process and gain language skills for the first time, they do not need to be coaxed to speak or be corrected for errors. At times, children may speak incorrectly (eg. assign incorrect suffixes to words to try and change the tense such as swimed instead of swam) in the process of learning how to utilize and apply rules of language received as comprehensible input (Chomsky, 1965). Therefore, in order to learn to use language, a child has only to analyze the

patterns of enough component parts of their language in order to use it (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011).

The theory of Translanguaging, building upon Language Acquisition Theory, specifically addresses the acquisition and usage of language in multilingual individuals. According to the theory of translanguaging, all individuals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select in order to communicate (Wei, 2017). This results in situations in which individuals with exposure to multiple languages may sometimes blend elements from multiple languages (Layton, 2016). Translanguaging is often used synonymously with other terms such as code-switching, code-mixing, or heteroglossia, used to describe the combining of elements from multiple languages. Translanguaging treats the linguistic knowledge of each individual as one complete whole and does not perceive different languages as separate entities that one can jump between (Wei, 2017). The theory of Translanguaging did not begin as a theory, rather, it began as a pedagogical practice first documented by Williams (1996) to describe instructional practices in Welsh language revitalization programs.

Language Acquisition Theory suggests that, in the classroom, students will innately engage in the process of language learning (Chomsky, 1965). It would follow that the same would hold true in a situation in which the affective filter is lowered and students are immersed in a language such as in early immersion education (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Donovan, 2003). Translanguaging also suggests that as multilingual individuals, students each possess a unique body of language knowledge that is built out of their linguistic experiences in multiple languages, leading to the natural usage of elements that others would code as different languages (Layton, 2017; Wei, 2017).

Review of Literature

Students in an immersion setting experience learning through a unique intersection: the development of foundational literacy skills in both a home and target language, in a setting in which many of the concepts of content areas are introduced to them for the first time. Language immersion is a language education practice in which two languages are used at differing levels for a variety of topics throughout a normal school day (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). In language immersion, students are learning new concepts and also mentally coding them in a language that they may not speak regularly at home (Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011). Therefore, it is not surprising that Paradis, Genesee, and Crago (2014), begin their discussion of code-mixing by saying that “virtually all children who acquire two languages simultaneously code-mix” (p.88). Code-mixing refers to the phenomenon of mixing languages in speech or writing (Canagarajah, 2011). While the phenomenon is widely known by language educators, opinions vary as to whether the mixed use of L1 and L2 should be viewed as a natural series of errors, a situation that educators should capitalize on, or both (Layton, 2016; Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2014; Wei, 2017). This literature review seeks to analyze the value of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach to writing instruction in a language immersion setting and begins with an analysis of the development of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach, followed by a review of positive influences of translanguaging teaching practices and strategies found in various settings throughout the world. It finishes with practical suggestions of how translanguaging could be used in an immersion setting to potentially aid elementary students struggling to develop writing skills in their L2.

Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Approach

The theory of translanguaging or “trawsieithu” was first developed in reference to pedagogical and instructional strategies used by teachers in Welsh heritage language programs (Williams, 1996). Unlike many modern immersion settings in which there are clear delineations between spaces and times in which students are expected to use their home and the target language, teachers in Welsh language programs provided for specific instructional activities in which students were expected to use both English and Welsh in order to facilitate language usage in Welsh when students did not have a robust enough vocabulary or grammatical knowledge to fully communicate ideas. For instance, in reading, drafting, writing, and speaking activities, teachers facilitated student use and transition of skills gained in one language into practice with the other. Later on, as immersion became an increasingly popular educational choice, the definition of translanguaging grew via additional research to form a pedagogical and theoretical approach to bilingual education in which hybrid language approaches to communication are analyzed, studied, and utilized in the planning of instructional activities (Dorner & Layton, 2014; Orellano & García, 2014). Other terms commonly associated with translanguaging include code-meshing, code-mixing, and language or literacy brokering (Canagarajah, 2011; Orellano & García, 2014; Paradis et al., 2011). While translanguaging can also serve as a theoretical framework for understanding language, for the duration of this paper, translanguaging will refer to the practice of planning and teaching instructional activities utilizing students’ L1 and L2 in the planning, drafting, revising, and sharing components of the writing process.

Despite the fact that the majority of immersion schools in the United States designate times that are specifically for English and times for the target language (e.g. Spanish, Chinese, French etc.), emerging research provides evidence that, for many elementary multilinguals, the

learners' academic (or cognitive) development of language skills happens in a hybrid fashion with students either switching between languages or utilizing both languages simultaneously (Layton, 2016). There is still debate over whether translanguaging (or the general substitution of a first language for the target language) is an error, a product of learning language, or a legitimate tool (Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011). As Moll, Saéz, and Dworin (2001) point out, reading and--in particular--writing does not occur in a "unilinear" fashion, placing bilingual learners in a unique and often complicated situation (p. 442). While students may receive the message that an L2 is the desired language of discourse in an academic setting, many other influences play into the development of skills in either language. Despite the confusion that results from requirements to speak in a specific language, even in the variety of foreign language immersion settings that exist, certain ideas of monolingualism continue to be privileged in the partitioning of languages between specific times and spaces.

Translanguaging as a Tool to Express Identity

The embracing of student identity and, by extension, the languages that form the individual, is a fundamental part of the theories that shape the additive bilingual environments that can be found more often in modern educational approaches that utilize student-centered activities, inquiry, and inclusionary educational practices. Additive bilingual environments, in direct contrast to subtractive bilingual environments, emphasize the importance of support for students to maintain their native language as they are in the process of acquiring another language (Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011). When students' native language isn't embraced, confusion about what is acceptable about the self can fester to the detriment of academic achievement. Danzak (2011), in an analysis of Spanish speaking students' self-identification as

monolingual or bilingual, found a strong connection between student perception of their literacy abilities, their actual literacy levels, and their perception of acceptance in the dominant culture of the United States. Students that expressed the deepest amount of confusion about societal attitudes towards themselves as immigrants and Spanish-speakers were often the most likely to self-identify as monolingual and, when given the choice, write in Spanish. When there was a perceived lack of acceptance of facets of their identity, academic achievement suffered. In contrast, modern research on language acquisition of English Language Learners or Emergent Multilinguals has revealed that student ability in their native language is often a high predictor of achievement in English. For example, Quiroga, Lemos-Britton, Mostafapour, Abbot, and Berninger (2002) found that students who were native Spanish speakers were able to improve phonological awareness skills in English after receiving phonological awareness instruction in Spanish. Ability in native language predicted and often assisted ability in a second language.

The modern literature that has analyzed the role of translanguaging in the classroom is primarily in agreement that translanguaging plays a vital role in the expression of identity and expression of thinking. This is critically important information for language immersion schools, where claims are usually made for an equitable education for students of varying linguistic backgrounds who are learning to write in two or more languages (Layton, 2016). The ability to express oneself, including past and present, and to feel validated in emotions and experiences being expressed are essential components of an equitable education.

In addition to this, the ability to choose language is an important part of identity in that it forms how one chooses to present one's self to others. Chosen words, as well as the language in which the words are spoken, make up a part of social identity. In their study of the language

development of Kindergartners in a bilingual classroom, Dorner and Layton (2014) noted the distinct choices made by children in their relatively free communication with peers during work time and how they reflected student values about peers, family, their academic persona, as well as the dominant culture in which they resided. For example, Dorner and Layton (2014) noted that a student who did not speak Spanish (the L1 of the school) at home frequently made the choice to speak Spanish at school and, when placed in a high-ability literacy group, subsequently selected to use Spanish more. Researchers suggested that the student associated Spanish with being a good student, therefore encouraging her to identify as a Spanish speaker. At the same time, researchers also observed how another student (who spoke Spanish at home) would speak Spanish at school when her Spanish-speaking identity was affirmed by teachers and peers, but would speak in English on the bus, perhaps because of unconsciously perceived ideas about her identity as an immigrant and the influence of negative societal connotations about immigrants (Dorner & Layton, 2014).

Translanguaging as a Tool to Communicate Ideas

Velasco and García (2014) also noted what may be one of the most educationally meaningful effects of translanguaging, arguing that the use of translanguaging in speaking as well as in writing allows students to achieve higher levels of expression, thought, and creativity in comparison to situations where they are required to work in a single language (p.7). Coming from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences means that different words in different languages hold different emotional and language-specific connotations to students. This idea is further affirmed by Kiramba (2017) and Martínez-Alvarez (2017), both of whom noted frequent translanguaging in student writing samples in response to prompts which required students to

explain stories or experiences that did not take place in an academic setting like a classroom. In particular, Kiramba (2017) noted samples that presented the persistent use of translanguaging on English writing assignments where students prioritized communication of their thoughts and ideas over adherence to grading practices. When speaking of plants, animals, and other environmental descriptors in English writing, students in rural Kenya persistently chose to use words in their native language, Kikuyu, the language in which they had learned about these things and most regularly spoke of them. While the writing that they produced was specific, detailed, and communicated a great deal of student knowledge about their writing prompt, it was done to the detriment of their writing grade that prioritized English and subtracted points for the use of any other language.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to many researchers in the field of translanguaging, there is a general lack of research regarding various populations of students and various benefits of translanguaging. Velasco and García (2014) make note that, while metacognition is an often cursory focus of translanguaging, there is still a lack of information surrounding translanguaging as a tool to develop self regulation skills surrounding the use of language. In addition to this, Dorner and Layton (2014) point out the tendency for much of the research surrounding multilingual educational environments to emphasize student acquisition of the L2 and learners' individual journey to language development, often ignoring the influence of the learners' community. Taking into account the important influence of cultural norms, attitudes, and perceptions on

students' ability to develop positive attitudes towards themselves as a multilingual and their skills in a second language, additional research on these environmental influences is still needed.

Questions Moving Forward

Based in part on areas that are still lacking research, it is still unclear what the influence of translanguaging might be in an immersion setting where the language of instruction is not English but the dominant language of the surrounding culture is English. Much of the research on the power of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool has taken place in situations in which students were in the process of learning a language of power (such as English), typically not in situations in which the majority of students were native speakers of the dominant language and in the process of learning another language. Many of the benefits of translanguaging lie in its ability to allow minority students the ability to access parts of their identity that may not fit the language of their school nor the dominant language of the society in which their school exists. Therefore, it is not quite clear how translanguaging may benefit students who already speak the dominant language.

However, based on an analysis of the literature surrounding the development of biliteracy and the role of translanguaging as a natural occurrence in a language learner's journey and as a pedagogical approach to language education, it is clear that translanguaging is a tool that could be leveraged to promote student access to and participation in literacy activities, regardless of the context. Similar to conclusions drawn by Martínez-Alvarez (2017), adherence to strict rules of language separation may be a hindrance to creative pursuits of expression. Similarly they may conflict with the priority of communication inherent to the act of writing (Kiramba, 2017;

Martínez-Alvarez, 2017; Velasco & García, 2014). Taking into account these communication and creative concerns, as well as the importance of identity and acceptance in the expressive process of writing, relaxing rigid separations between the two languages of instruction in order to analyze the effect of providing students with options when choosing their language seems to be the most fruitful avenue of research.

Research Methodology

This study used an experimental design that intended to gather information from classroom behavior observations, student questionnaires, and an analysis of students' writing samples. These tools were used to determine the usefulness of translanguaging in assisting students when writing in a specific language.

The population of this action research study was third grade students at a Spanish immersion school in a suburban public school in the Midwestern United States. The sample included twenty-eight third graders in the same homeroom class who participated in the same Spanish Language Arts class with their Spanish-speaking homeroom teacher as well as the same English Language Arts class with an English-speaking teacher. Of the twenty-eight students, eleven are male and seventeen are female. Additionally, five students come from families that speak Spanish as the dominant language at home. Of those five students, four receive services for English as a Second Language (ESL) or Emergent Multilinguals (EM). The other twenty-three students come from families that identify English as their primary household language. After completion of the translanguaging writing intervention, twenty-six of the

twenty-eight students' data was included for analysis. Two students wrote a total of 0 words for all three writing samples and were excluded from the data analysis to avoid skewing results.

Over the course of the entirety of the narrative writing unit--or 3 weeks--students produced three separate writing samples. Writing Sample 1 was completed in English while Sample 2 and Sample 3 were completed in Spanish. Sample 1 was completed with their English Language Arts teacher. Sample 2 was completed with their Spanish Language Arts Teacher. Sample 3 was completed with both their Spanish and English Language Arts teacher for the first two days of work and then with just their Spanish Language Arts teacher for the rest of their work time due to scheduling constraints. It was planned for students to spend a total of 5 hours working on each of the writing samples. Students spent a total of 5 hours on Sample 2 and Sample 3. While students all completed a similar pattern of work for Sample 1 with their English Language Arts teacher and spent 5 hours working on Sample 1, students were told that they were not required to turn in Sample 1 immediately and were allowed to continue working on the sample as a work option if they finished an assignment early. Due to the fact that this made it impossible to gauge the exact time students spent working on Sample 1, data from Sample 1 will not be included in the analysis of data. Writing Sample 1 was intended to serve as a baseline for writing ability in English, which is the first language of a majority of students in the class. Sample 2 and Sample 3, both in Spanish, were meant to serve as products to compare in order to judge the effectiveness of the translanguaging prewriting intervention.

Prior to beginning their work on each of the writing samples, students filled out a prewriting document to collect ideas for description and details to include in their work. Two versions of the document were made, one in English (see Appendix A) and one in Spanish (see

Appendix B). The prewriting document in English was used for Sample 1. The prewriting document in Spanish was used for Sample 2 and Sample 3. The documents were exactly the same in format except for the language of the text. The document included a section for gathering words and descriptions related to each of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) as well as a sixth section for emotions. For the first step of each writing sample, students were shown strong and weak examples of a completed prewriting document. The completed prewriting document that students were shown was done in the language that they needed to write in. For Sample 1, they were shown a document in English with writing in English. For Sample 2, they were shown a document in Spanish with writing in Spanish. For Sample 3, they were shown a document in Spanish with writing in both English and Spanish as part of the translanguaging prewriting intervention. This was done before students began working on their own document. Students were encouraged to write down vivid descriptions and were shown examples of adjectives used to increase detail. Once all preparation activities were completed before each of the samples, students worked on their narratives. These preparation activities were consistent across all three work samples with the exception of Sample 3, which also included the translanguaging prewriting intervention.

In the round of writing for Sample 3, both the students' Spanish homeroom and English teacher were present for the first day of writing. Students were shown an example of the Spanish prewriting document. This time, the document had words in both English and Spanish. Students were told they could use whatever language they wished in their prewriting document and to consult both the Spanish and English teacher for help with word choice in either language. Both teachers also informed students that, while the prewriting document could be completed in either

or both languages, students should translate any words in English into Spanish before beginning to write and complete the writing activity in Spanish.

After all three writing samples were collected, words were counted to get an overall word count and an adjective count for Sample 2 and Sample 3. Adjectives were counted as unique adjectives. If a student used an adjective more than once throughout their writing sample, the adjective was counted once. Due to the fact that a majority of students spent significantly longer than 5 hours on Sample 1 in English, the data from the sample have not been included in the analysis. The words that students wrote down on their translanguaging prewriting document were additionally recorded and categorized into parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective) for further analysis.

After completing their three writing samples, students were originally going to complete a survey that featured a series of open-ended questions and rating scales. These questions were designed to gather information about students' perception of the usefulness of translanguaging as well as overall perception of the strength of their work across multiple writing projects. However, because of an extended Spring Break due to the COVID-19 outbreak, students did not complete the survey.

Behavioral observations were also conducted while students were working on Sample 2 and Sample 3 in order to compare writing behaviors with and without the translanguaging writing intervention. During work time for Sample 2 and Sample 3, observations were recorded for two five-minute periods each day. This added up to a total of 50 minutes of observations for Sample 2 and 50 minutes of observations for Sample 3. The three behaviors marked on the observational form included (1) using an online English-Spanish dictionary, (2) consulting the

pre-writing document while in the process of writing, and (3) asking a peer for help in translating a word. The behavior of asking a teacher with help translating a word was not one of the behaviors that was looked for due to the fact that it was a behavior that students already consistently showed. Many students were in the habit of interrupting conversations to ask a teacher to translate a word because it took less time than looking the word up on their own. Therefore, this behavior wasn't recorded.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to answer the following three research questions:

1. To what extent does structured translanguaging affect students' amount of writing.
2. To what extent does structured translanguaging affect a students' use of adjectives?
3. To what extent does students' use of adjectives affect overall word production?
4. Can use of a structured translanguaging tool increase positive student writing behaviors?
5. When given the opportunity, how do students utilize translanguaging in their writing?

The research was experimental and involved an analysis of word count and adjective usage in different writing samples for a narrative writing project as well as an analysis of words that students chose to translanguague. In addition to this, the data also included a behavior tally log for an analysis of positive writing behaviors with and without the translanguaging intervention.

Influence of Translanguaging on Amount of Writing

The first research question that this study addresses was the influence of translanguaging on the amount that students write. In this study, the amount of writing was measured through word count.

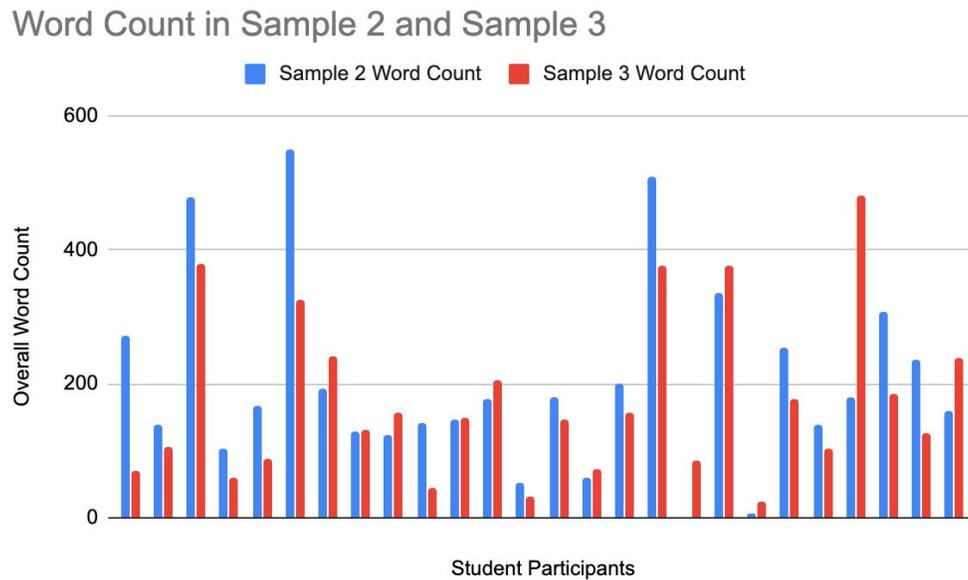


Figure 1. Students' total word count in Sample 2 and Sample 3.

Although twenty-eight students participated in all of the learning activities, Figure 1 only shows data from twenty-six students. Two students wrote a total of zero words for each of the writing samples and have been excluded from the data analysis. Overall, twelve students increased their word count while fifteen students decreased their word count. Of the twelve students that increased their word count, five increased their adjective count, five decreased their adjective count, and two wrote the same number of adjectives while also increasing their word count.

Table 1

Average Word Count and Average Word Count Change

Sample 2 Average Word Count	Sample 3 Average Word Count	Average Word Count Change
201.42	174.5	-22

Between Sample 2 and Sample 3, the average word count change decreased by twenty-two words, meaning that, on average, students wrote twenty two words less on their Sample 3 in comparison to Sample 2.

Influence of Translanguaging on Adjective Selection

The second research question that this study addressed was the extent to which structured translanguaging in the writing process could affect students' use of adjectives. Structured translanguaging here refers to students' opportunity to choose between and use multiple languages in a planned learning activity rather than the unplanned switching of languages that students engage in while socializing with peers. Opportunities for structured translanguaging were provided to students at the beginning of writing Sample 3 in the form of (1) the prewriting document (see Appendix B) as well as (2) review of another document with strong and weak examples of prewriting that featured the use of translanguaging with English words interspersed with Spanish words. The process of using an online dictionary tool to translate English words to Spanish words was also part of the introductory activities that all students participated in for Sample 3. Student use of descriptive words was quantified by counting the number of unique adjectives that appeared in student writing samples as well as comparing the ratio of overall word count to adjectives.

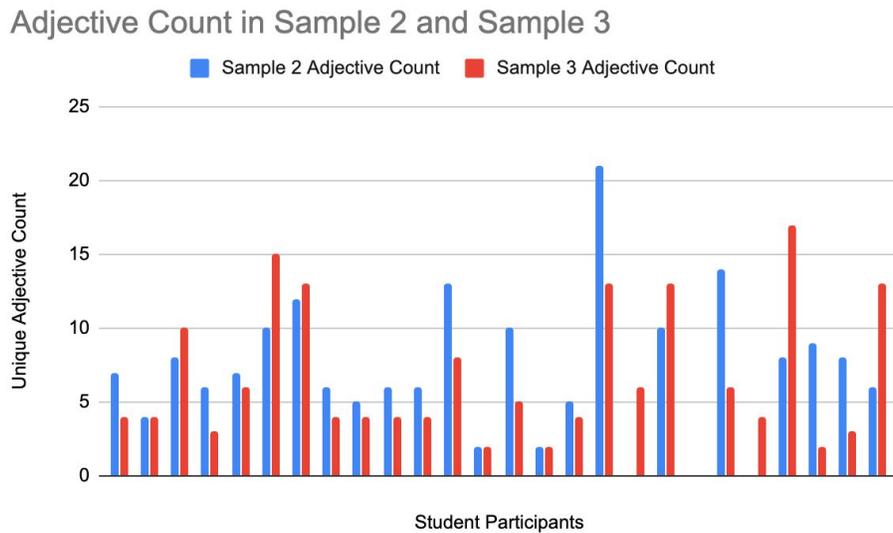


Figure 2. Students’ total unique adjective count in Sample 2 and Sample 3.

Similar to the first research question, although twenty-eight students participated in all of the learning activities, Figure 2 only shows data from twenty-six students. Two students wrote a total of zero words for each of the writing samples and have been excluded from the data analysis for word count as well as adjective count. Adjective count totals for all twenty-six students were used. However, two additional students wrote zero adjectives in both Sample 2 and Sample 3. These students were not excluded from the analysis due to the fact that they still generated text for their writing samples.

Table 2

Average Adjective Count and Adjective Change

<u>Sample 2 Adjective Count</u>	<u>Sample 3 Adjective Count</u>	<u>Adjective Count Change</u>
7.11	6.5	-0.61

While some students showed an increase in the number of unique adjectives utilized in their writing from Sample 2 to Sample 3, the average change of the adjective count between Sample 2 and Sample 3 was a decrease of 0.58 words. Overall, eight students increased the number of adjectives from Sample 2 to Sample 3, 14 students decreased the number of adjectives from Sample 2 to Sample 3, and three students had the same number of unique adjectives present in each writing sample.

Influence of Adjective Use on Overall Word Production

The third research question that this research project addressed was the relationship between student adjective usage and overall writing production. For the purpose of this project, student vocabulary for a narrative writing project was quantified with a count of unique adjectives and writing production was quantified with the overall word count of their writing samples.

Table 3

Average Ratio of Adjectives to Word Count and Ratio of Adjective to Word Count Change

Sample 2 Average Ratio of Adjectives to Word Count	Sample 3 Average Ratio of Adjectives to Word Count	Average Ratio of Adjective to Word Count Change
0.036	0.04	0.004

The average ratio of unique adjectives in Sample 2 was 0.036 (or 3.6 adjectives per 100 words) and 0.04 adjectives (or 4 adjectives per 100 words) in Sample 3. There was a slight increase in averages. The average ratio of change between individual students' Sample 2 and Sample 3 was 0.004. Therefore, at the same time that the average word count fell between

Sample 2 and Sample 3 (see Table 1) and the average number of adjectives also fell (see Table 2), the ratio of adjectives to overall word count increased slightly (see Table 3).

There are a few possibilities as to why students were slightly more concise in Sample 3, their last writing sample. It's possible that word count fell because students were becoming bored with the repetition of the same writing activity while, at the same time, honing their ability to produce writing that elicited a positive reaction from their teacher. In other words, students may have lost engagement in the writing projects and therefore did not try to go above and beyond what was required, but were still motivated enough to complete work that they thought their teacher would find acceptable.

On the same note, it's also possible that many students picked up on the importance of adjectives in the writing activities due to the fact that they were emphasized in the prewriting activities at the beginning of every writing sample. Therefore, one of the characteristics of their writing that students were more likely to focus on maintaining (or focus on improving) as they repeated the process of writing a narrative would be the adjectives that they chose to use and the amount of adjectives that they chose to use. In fact, two students decreased their word count while maintaining the exact same number of adjectives and three students decreased their overall word count while increasing the number of adjectives in their writing. One student even decreased their word count between Sample 2 and Sample 3 by 224 words while increasing their adjective count from 10 to 15.

Influence of Translanguaging on Positive Writing Behaviors

The fourth research question of this project sought to gauge the influence of a structured translanguaging intervention on positive writing behaviors. Positive writing behaviors were

quantifiably measured through a behavior tally chart. The three behaviors that were observed on this chart included: (1) using an online English-Spanish dictionary, (2) consulting the pre-writing document while in the process of writing, and (3) asking a peer for help with translating a word. The behavior of asking a teacher for help translating a word was not recorded in the chart due to the fact that it was a behavior that students already exhibited prior to the study. Observations for these three writing behaviors were taken during two five-minute periods each day by the Spanish homeroom teacher during work time for Sample 2 and Sample 3 for a total of 50 minutes of observation for each writing sample.

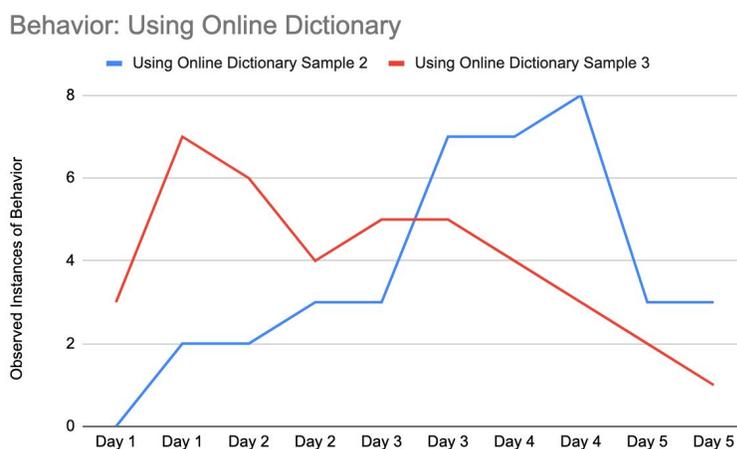


Figure 3. Observed instances of students utilizing an online dictionary tool to translate a word.

The behavior of utilizing an online dictionary was marked as observed if a student was observed opening their iPad and going to the online dictionary website to look up a word as well as if a student was observed having their iPad open to and using a dictionary website during the five-minute observation window. This meant that the behavior was marked as observed in the observational log if a student was observed looking up one word or if a student was using an

online dictionary over the course of the observation window and may have looked up multiple words.

In Figure 3, the trend of observed behaviors for utilizing an online dictionary are flipped between Sample 2 and Sample 3. While working on Sample 2, observed student usage rose on Day 3 and remained consistently high. During Sample 3, observed usage of an online dictionary peaked on Day 1 and fell throughout the remaining work days. The total number of observed instances for Sample 2 was 38 while the total number of observed instances for Sample 3 was 40, making the behavior of utilizing an online dictionary the most frequently observed behavior of the three that were recorded in five-minute observational windows. The maximum number of observations was highest during Sample 2, with eight observed instances, while the maximum number of observed instances during Sample 3 was seven.

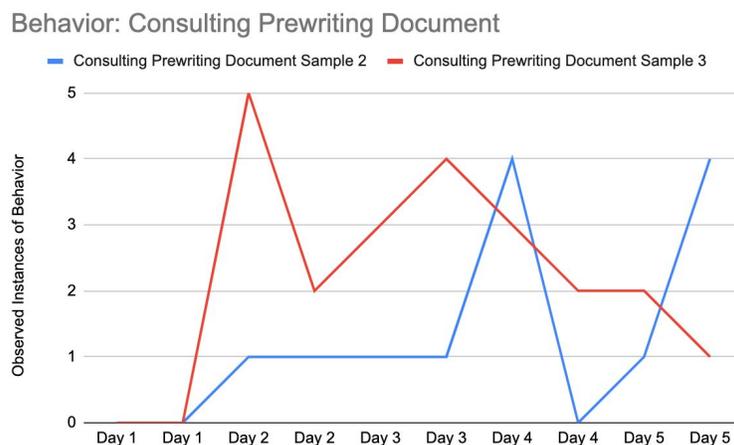


Figure 4. Observed instances of students consulting the prewriting document while in the process of writing their narrative.

The behavior of consulting the prewriting document was marked as observed if a student was observed pausing while writing in order to look at a word or phrase on the prewriting

document as well as if they were going back and forth between their writing and the prewriting document. This meant that some students may have consulted the prewriting document more than once in a five-minute observation window, but were only marked once in the observation log. However, situations like that were very infrequent.

In Figure 4, observations of the behavior of consulting the prewriting document while working on writing remained consistently low (one a day) until Day 4 and Day 5, when there were four observations during one five minute period each day. Low observations on Day 1 are likely due to the fact that many students were still working on their prewriting document and so could not “consult” it while working on their actual narrative. A large chunk of students did not complete their prewriting document for Sample 2 until the third day. During Sample 3, observations of the behavior spike during Day 1 (with a maximum of 5 observations) and decrease throughout the five day work period. The spike in observed behaviors on Day 1 is likely due to the fact that students had worked with the document for two previous work samples. They were familiar with the writing process and completed the prewriting document faster, moving on to begin writing earlier than they may have for past writing samples. Very few students were still working on their prewriting document for Sample 3 on the third day as they had been when working on the document for Sample 2.

Another important data point is the fact that overall observed instances of the behavior of consulting the prewriting document did not rise significantly between Sample 2 and Sample 3. The total number of observed instances of the behavior during Sample 2 was 13 while the total number of observed instances of the behavior during Sample 3 was 19.

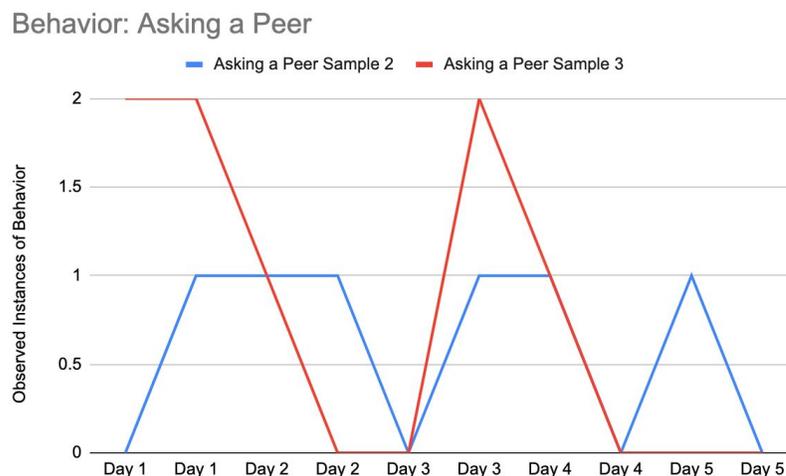


Figure 5. Observed instances of students asking a peer for help with translating a word.

In Figure 5, observations of the behavior of asking a peer for help translating a word were low throughout Sample 2 and Sample 3. At most, two observations of the behavior were made during each observation period. It was more common for students to ask a peer about a word at the beginning of the writing period for Sample 3--likely tied to the spike in usage of online dictionaries at the beginning of writing Sample 3 as well. More students concentrated their “translation time” or time using an online dictionary to the Day 1 and Day 2 of Sample 3. When students asked a peer about a word, it was often while using an online dictionary. Anecdotal observations that were not recorded on the tally sheet revealed that students consulted an online dictionary first and then asked a peer about a word if they ran into an obstacle such as not knowing how to spell a word in English or being unsure of which translation to use when presented with multiple options. One of the writing strategies lead to another writing strategy.

Student Use of Translanguaging and Parts of Speech

The fifth question that this research project sought to address was what types of words students chose to use when given the opportunity to translanguage--in other words, what types of

words students most often access and use in their writing through the strategy of translanguaging. These words were identified from the prewriting document that students used at the beginning of each writing sample. In the introductory activities for the third writing sample, students also reviewed another document with strong and weak examples of prewriting that featured words in English and Spanish followed by reviewing the process of translating the English words to Spanish. Students were instructed to record the Spanish word alongside the English word on the document. These words were collected and categorized based on parts of speech. The table below displays a breakdown of the types of words that students recorded in English and then translated to Spanish prior to beginning to write their narratives. Data from all twenty-six students that completed Sample 2 and Sample 3 and that are included as well in the analysis for word count are included here. The two students that were excluded from the analysis of word and adjective count were also excluded from this analysis as they failed to complete Sample 2, Sample 3, as well as fill out their prewriting documents for either writing sample. It is important to note that not all students recorded words in English to translate into Spanish prior to beginning to write. Of the 28 students in the class, six students did not record any words in English.

Table 4

Breakdown of English Words in Prewriting Document

Nouns	81 (83.5%)
Adjectives	13 (13.4%)
Verbs	3 (3.1%)
Total Words: 97	

As seen in Table 4, the type of word that students identified as important to their story and recorded in English prior to beginning to write was most often a noun. Some of the words that students wrote in English and sought a translation for included: zipline, hot dog, seaweed, trampoline, ice cream sundaes, tower, sculpture, wire, and joke. Of the 13 adjectives that students recorded in English, nine of the words were related specifically to emotion and were used to describe themselves in their narrative. These self-describing words included: annoyed, hungry, worried, surprised, happy, furious, and hurt. The three verbs that were written in English included: to flash, to sizzle, and to lift.

Of the twenty-six students who completed the prewriting document, six did not write any words in English. All of these students that chose to not use any English words come from an English-speaking family and do not receive EM or ESL services. Many, but not all, of these students still engaged in the behavior of using an online dictionary to look up a word in the target language--in other words, these students still engaged in the act of translating English words into Spanish. However, they did not do so before beginning to write and only utilized the dictionary tool while they were in the process of writing. Of the six students that did not take advantage of the opportunity to use English in their prewriting activity (and wrote only in Spanish), five of them did not complete their writing Sample 2 or Sample 3 in the allotted time. In other words, these students turned in writing samples, but did not have a completed beginning, middle, and end to the story that they wished to describe.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The translanguaging prewriting document alone was not sufficient to produce a significant improvement in student writing in terms of overall word count or adjective count.
- The translanguaging prewriting document increased the overall student likelihood to use an online dictionary or translation tool before or during writing.
- The translanguaging prewriting document assisted students in preparing nouns that were relevant and aided in communicating their story.

Influence of Intervention on Adjective Usage and Word Count

It is interesting to note that, while the average change of overall word count (-22, see Table 1) and the average change of adjective count (-0.61, see Table 2) fell between Sample 2 and Sample 3, the ratio of adjectives to word count did rise. For Sample 2, the average ratio of adjectives to word count was 0.036, which rose to 0.04 for Sample 3. Additionally, the average ratio change for student work between Sample 2 and Sample 3 was also, though small, positive. Given this data, it's possible to suggest that, though students on average wrote less for Sample 3, they wrote in a slightly more concise manner without greatly influencing the number of adjectives that they used.

However, while some students increased the ratio of unique adjectives in their writing between the second and third writing sample, the overall average change of the ratio between unique adjectives to word count increased by an insignificant amount (0.4%). This small change makes it clear that usage of the prewriting document alone and inclusion of a structured translanguaging introductory activity is not sufficient to greatly impact student usage of adjectives in their writing. At the same time, further analysis of the words that students chose to

translanguage on the prewriting document may reveal next steps for interventions to improve student ability to use adjectives. Based on the fact that students chose to translanguage nouns much more often than adjectives, writing instruction focusing on nouns may be more beneficial before instruction focusing on adjectives.

Influence of Intervention on Writing Behaviors

Based on behavior observations, overall usage of online dictionaries (see Figure 3) went up over the course of the second and third writing sample from 38 observations in Sample 2 to 40 observations in Sample 3, revealing that the use of the prewriting document did have some impact on student use of an online dictionary. As stated before, Figure 3 shows a flip in concentrated observations of the behavior between Sample 2 and Sample 3. During Sample 2, students were more likely to be observed using an online dictionary tool from Day 3 to Day 5, at the end of the writing period when the majority of students were engaged in the process of writing. During Sample 3, this trend is reversed, with most observations of this behavior taking place on Day 1 and 2, when students had not begun writing and were still working on the prewriting document, using the online dictionary tool as instructed to translate words that they wrote in English on the document. The graph for Sample 3 still shows a slight spike on Day 3 for observed instances of the behavior, an anomaly that can be accounted for by the fact that, despite receiving instructions to do so, some students wrote zero words in English on their prewriting document but still used an online dictionary while they were in the process of writing as they had for Sample 2.

Overall, the behavior of using an online dictionary was observed 38 times during Sample 2. During Sample 3, the total number of observations rose to 40. Anecdotally, outside of the

five-minute observation windows, the number of students that used an online dictionary rose and many students that had not used an online dictionary tool during Sample 2 chose to use it during Sample 3. The vast majority of those that chose to use an online dictionary did so at the end of Day 1 and used the tool for five to ten minutes owing to the fact that they had a prepared list of words. This differed greatly from students' tendency to leave the application open and continually pause and refer back to it while working on Sample 2. If students used an online dictionary tool during a five-minute observation window, they were recorded as using it once even if they had looked up more than one word. This system for observation was necessary due to the fact that the teacher had to be aware of all students in the class and could not focus on observing single students during each five-minute observation window. Therefore, while the observed number of instances rose only slightly in the observational log, the actual number of students that chose to use an online dictionary and the number of words that were translated increased quite a bit based on anecdotal observations but was not reflected in the data.

Based on behavior observations for the second target behavior of consulting the prewriting document, instances of this behavior rose slightly as well (see Figure 4). The total number of observed instances during Sample 2 was 13 while the total number of observed instances during Sample 3 was 19. Similar to observations recorded for utilizing an online dictionary, a student was marked once for having engaged in the behavior of consulting the prewriting document if they had the prewriting document in front of them while writing and were observed looking at it. This meant that students may have consulted the prewriting document for more than one word during a five-minute observation window, but they were only marked once.

While this increase in the observed instances of consulting the prewriting document was greater than the increase seen in the number of observed instances of students utilizing an online dictionary, the fact that this behavior was observed significantly less is important. The prewriting document was a heavily emphasized component of the writing process for the three writing samples and was shown to students in connection with strong and weak work. The fact that many students chose to ultimately discard the document once they completed it and wrote without consulting the words that they had written while brainstorming and translating reveals that many students may not have known how to use a tool like a planning document to aid them in their writing. This would account for the fact that the behavior of consulting the document was observed much less than the behavior of utilizing an online dictionary. The prewriting document was the main component of the structured translanguaging intervention so the lack of observed usage is a possible explanation for its lack of influence on student writing.

This is supported as well by the anecdotal observations of which students chose to use the prewriting document. While the number of observed instances of the behavior went up, the number of different students that engaged in the behavior did not increase. In other words, the students that consulted their prewriting document in Sample 2 were usually the same students that consulted their prewriting document in Sample 3. The same students appeared to be consulting their prewriting documents more frequently.

Student Word Choice in Translanguaging

Table 4 showcases the fact that it was significantly more likely for students to translanguage nouns in comparison to any other type of speech. Of the 97 different words that students chose to record in English and then translate into Spanish, 81 (or 83.5%) were nouns.

Only 13 (or 13.4%) of the words were adjectives. The fact that nouns were the type of word that students were most likely to translate suggests that noun production must precede adjective production. Students did not want to describe something if they couldn't first provide a name for that "something". Though students were often not using adjectives to provide descriptions of the stories in their narratives, they still engaged in the act of communicating description by describing things that they could see, things that they interacted with, or other things that interacted with their senses, whether it was by smell, sound, taste, or touch. For example, one student in his narrative about his family vacation wrote the following, translated into English.

I went snorkeling in Australia. I went with my cousins, my sister, and my uncle. I did a stomach flop. I went snorkeling. It was fun. I saw seaweed. I saw fish. I touched a fish. I felt the scales. I saw a stingray for a while but it wasn't stinging. I needed to stop snorkeling because there was no time.

The words that the student wrote in English on his prewriting document included the underlined words "stingray", "seaweed", and "scales", all nouns. While the student didn't write any adjectives in English to add to their description, the nouns that the student chose to write in English and then translate into Spanish were clearly being used to enhance description. Both the words "stingray" and "seaweed" were written in the section of the prewriting document designated for descriptions of things that could be seen and the word "scales" was written in the section of the prewriting document for things that could be felt. Students chose to translanguage

words to describe important things in their narrative. It just so happened that their descriptions of the things used nouns instead of adjectives.

The idea of resorting to translanguaging in order to communicate aligns with Velasco and García (2014). In their study, they noted translanguaging being used to aid in communication of a memory or idea important to the writer. Students were more likely to choose to translate nouns from English to Spanish because they viewed the noun as a more specific descriptor of the object that they wished to describe. This finding also aligns closely with what Kiramba (2017) reports, that students would frequently translanguague, utilizing a single noun in their native language that they felt could describe something more effectively and efficiently than the vocabulary that they could access in their English language classes. This was done to the detriment of their grade on these papers. Similarly, in this study, three students wrote sections of their Sample 2 in English despite receiving daily reminders that the final product should be written exclusively in Spanish. The words that students wrote in English on their Sample 2 were all nouns, including words like “bridge” and “lobby”. These were words that students only knew how to say in English and were necessary to communicate their location or the objects around them in their story. For Sample 3, the same idea held true for students who came from families that identified Spanish as their primary language at home. For students who selected to write about a memory at a public place such as a water park, where English would be the primary language being heard, they identified words such as “hot dog” or “water slide” as words that they did not know how to say in Spanish because they are words that were used only in the context of the English-dominant location and were said only in English even though the students would have otherwise spoken Spanish with their family members at that time.

Inclusion of words that were spoken aloud in either language by themselves or people that were with them in the story was a common theme throughout student narratives. Adjectives that were written in English included words like “tired”, “hungry”, and “dirty”, which were adjectives that were more heavily associated with information that they would have verbalized in English and shared with others in the story that they were attempting to describe. While these adjectives were present in student writing, the most common adjectives students used to describe something in their story were descriptions such as “fast”, “fun”, “delicious” or “incredible”. Adjectives such as “delicious” and “incredible” are words that are frequently used by students when speaking or writing in Spanish due to the fact that they are cognates. Other adjectives like “fast” and “fun” are adjectives that students were more likely to have received direct instruction in. This would have been done in order to facilitate basic conversation and understanding of directions in their Spanish homeroom classes. They are also words that they hear more frequently from their Spanish-speaking homeroom teachers.

Action Plan

Analysis of the data for this study revealed that students that struggle to write in a second language in an immersion setting are limited by more than just vocabulary. A structured translanguaging prewriting activity in the writing process is not sufficient to improve writing performance on assignments such as descriptive personal narratives. The structured translanguaging activity did not increase the overall word count or adjective count in student writing samples.

While students were able to identify words that they needed to describe an event in their life prior to beginning to write, identifying these words did not improve their overall ability to

produce writing (as measured by word count) or the descriptive nature of their writing (as measured by adjective use). The fact that many students did not improve their word or adjective count showcases that other writing interventions are needed in order to significantly impact writing ability. These interventions could include direct instruction with the use of sentence stems or sentence frames to guide students in structuring sentences that include adjectives. These interventions could also include direct instruction with the process of editing text to include more adjectives and descriptive phrases. Moreover, these interventions could be used to complement a structure in which students could utilize vocabulary from multiple languages.

Two recommendations for the future include: (1) direct instruction on sentence structure using adjectives and (2) direct instruction on how to use a prewriting document to enhance writing.

With regards to the first recommendation, based on the data collected on types of words that students did not know in the target language, the identification of nouns as the most common words that students looked up in the target language revealed that students may not include adjectives in their concept of describing something or may not know how to effectively use them in sentence structure. Student ability to utilize vocabulary in English did not drastically impact their ability to write in Spanish, revealing that the language being used is not the greatest obstacle in writing performance and that students require more direct instruction in purpose and use of adjectives.

Furthermore, it was a common theme for students to include what they seemed to view as “descriptions” in their writing, but used few adjectives to do so, emphasizing description through lists of items that they could see, hear, smell, or touch without additional descriptive words to

accompany the nouns. Many students wrote lengthy narratives, but did so with repetitive sentence structures that resulted in a list of actions or a list of things that they saw without elaboration. In fact, two students completed narratives for both Sample 2 and Sample 3, but did so without a single adjective in the entire narrative. This reveals that students need more direct instruction with adjectives and sentence structure so that they can (1) identify adjectives as something to enhance description and (2) correctly utilize them in their writing.

With regards to the second recommendation, the lack of observed usage of the prewriting document while writing was also a significant data point in determining effectiveness of this translanguaging intervention on student writing ability. The total number of observed instances of the behavior during Sample 2 was 13 while the total number of observed instances of the behavior during Sample 3 was 19. Though there was an increase in the amount of observed instances of the behavior, the fact that students were only observed consulting the prewriting document six more times in a total of 50 minutes of observation spread out over five days shows that there wasn't a huge increase in a behavior that was expected to increase given the emphasis placed on the prewriting document. Additionally, as stated before, the number of observed instances of students consulting the prewriting document was still concentrated in the same students. While the same students consulted their prewriting document more than they had during Sample 2, there were very few students who decided to consult the prewriting document during Sample 3 that hadn't done so during Sample 2.

Overall, even though students were instructed on how to fill out the prewriting document with vivid description and shown example prewriting documents that matched with example narratives meant to showcase strong work, many students did not engage in the behavior of

consulting their prewriting document when working on their writing. Many students identified words that they thought were important descriptions for the narrative they wanted to write, recorded the word in English, and translated it into Spanish on their prewriting document, but never included the words in their actual writing. This shows that additional instruction is needed on organizational and executive functioning skills for writing, such as organizing work, reading through one's own work, and checking for inclusion of all details.

Though the data show that a structured translanguaging intervention such as the prewriting document in this study was not sufficient to have an impact to increase the overall word count and the number of adjectives used in the writing of Spanish immersion elementary students, it did rule out target language vocabulary as the primary obstacle for writing difficulty as well as reveal opportunities for writing instruction with the potential to improve students' ability to write in the target language. Though students rarely used the prewriting document in this study in order to translate adjectives that they knew in English into Spanish, the fact that they didn't reveals that additional practice with and instruction on adjective usage is what is needed in order to increase the amount of unique adjectives that students use in their descriptive writing. Even more importantly, behavioral observations revealed that many students need additional support and guidance in using resources like the prewriting document in order to improve their writing. After all, if students don't know how to use or do not choose to use resources to help them while they are writing, the resources have no chance of helping at all.

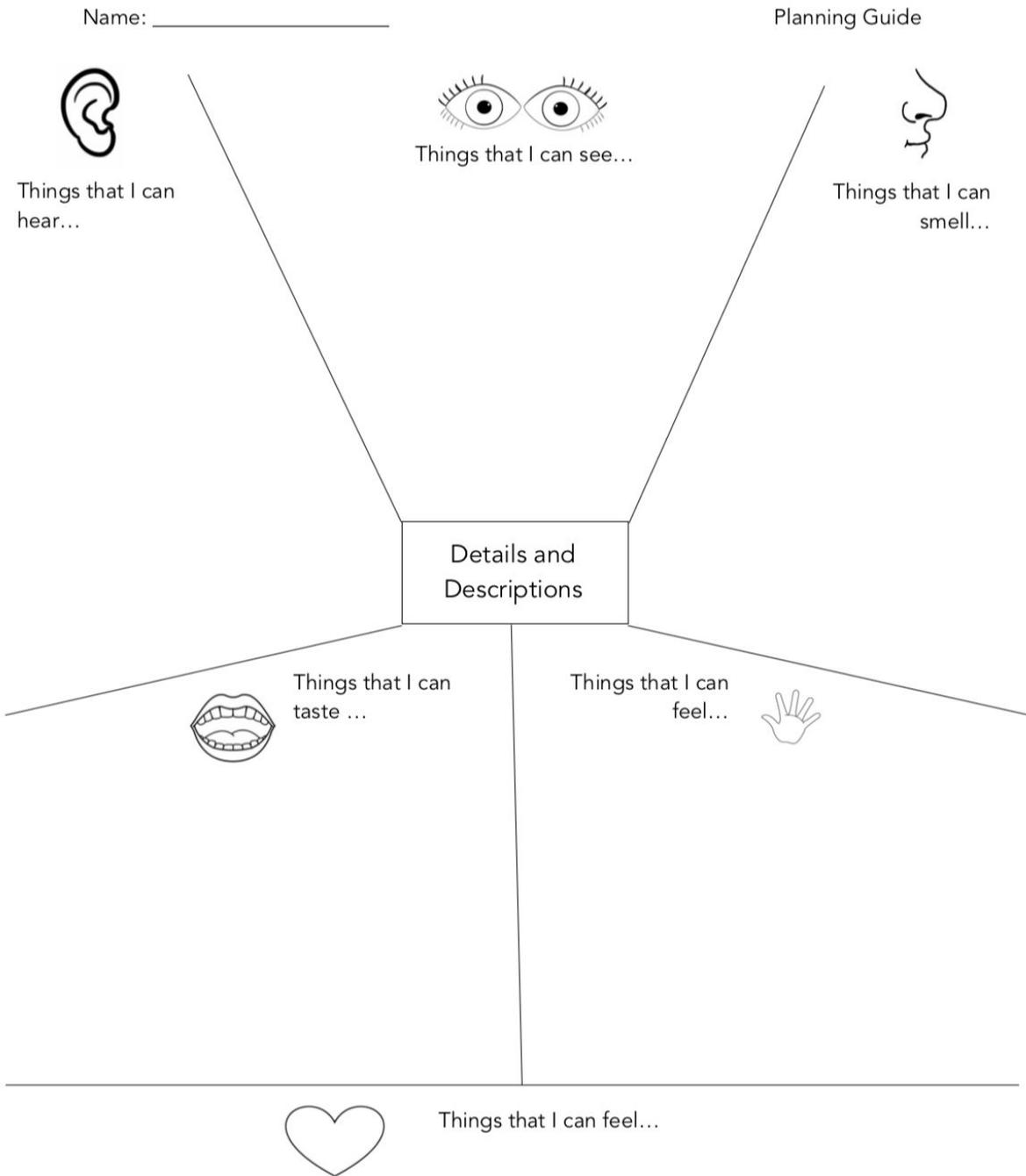
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Appendix A

Translanguaging Prewriting Document (English)



Appendix B

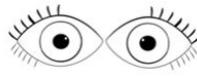
Translanguaging Prewriting Document (Spanish)

Nombre: _____

Guía de Planeación



Cosas que puedo escuchar...



Cosas que puedo ver...



Cosas que puedo oler...

Detalles y
Descripciones



Cosas que puedo saborear...

Cosas que puedo sentir...



Cosas que puedo sentir...