

Language Use

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Equity

K-12

Teacher Learning

Language

Language Use



"I am my language."

— Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana scholar and poet

"In order to learn, students must use what they already know so as to give meaning to what the teacher presents to them. Speech makes it possible [...] to relate new knowledge to old. This possibility depends on the social relationships, the communication system, which the teacher sets up."

— Douglas Barnes, British researcher

Portuguese in Boston; Hmong in St. Paul; Mandarin Chinese in Los Angeles and Haitian Creole in Miami; Arabic in Michigan; Vietnamese in San Jose; African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and many varieties of Spanish, spoken all over the country.

Add Somali and Russian, and you have the [10 most commonly reported home languages](#) of English Language Learner (ELL) students in the United States. Of the 10, Spanish is especially noteworthy: 75% of children from immigrant

families in the U.S. speak Spanish, and with over 40 million speakers, the US is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world (before Peru, Venezuela, or Chile). This linguistic diversity is impressive and growing: 66 million US residents speak a language other than English at home, a number that has doubled since 1990.

Educators reading all these statistics face a crucial question:

What place should these languages have within the U.S. classroom?

Answering this question is not always a simple task. Though many teachers see the value of incorporating students' diverse, "everyday" or home languages (including varieties like dialects, vernaculars, or creoles), these educators also have practical questions and constraints to grapple with:

- Will letting students use languages other than Standard English slow their learning?
- If standardized tests are given in one language, should I really let my students use another?
- I only speak English; how can I engage in everyday language use with my students?
- How do I avoid cultural appropriation while adopting students' languages or vernaculars?
- My classroom has students that speak many different languages; how do I engage them all effectively?
- Is it appropriate or helpful to divide my students into language groups for discussion?
- Is validating African-American Vernacular English in school appropriate? Won't employers expect them to code-switch anyway?
- Will using different languages affect participation in the classroom for native English speakers?

These are reasonable questions to ask, and we hope that this chapter will help you find answers. As you will see, the Language Use dimension (the first dimension of the CASI) proposes that everyday languages are not something to be discouraged or denigrated; rather, welcoming these languages (which students are already using outside of school) into the classroom can improve the school experience for minoritized students and lead to improved outcomes.

The central question of this chapter is:

Central Question

How can I incorporate everyday languages (e.g., dialects, vernaculars, creoles) into the classroom to enhance the instruction, social relations, and cultural identities of my students?

Our goal with this chapter is to help you find simple, genuine ways to incorporate everyday languages into your classroom more often, for the benefit of all your students (especially those from minoritized backgrounds). Specifically, after working through this chapter and practicing in your classroom (either by yourself or with other teachers) you should be able to:

1. Identify what everyday language use means and what it looks like.
2. Explain some reasons why everyday language use is helpful for students.
3. Interpret actual teaching scenarios (including your own) according to the indicators of Language Use.
4. Plan and implement lessons that incorporate everyday language use more often into instructional content, social conversation, and the classroom climate, as well as encouraging student use.

We've included examples of good practice throughout this chapter, along with outside resources if you want to dive deeper. But before we start working on classroom practice, it's important to understand why everyday language use matters, what it really looks like in the classroom, and how you can measure it in your own day-to-day interactions with students.

Let's start with **why everyday language use matters** (and begin answering some of those questions).

Why Language Use Matters

There are several ways to think about why everyday Language Use matters. One way is to frame it in terms of modern U.S. circumstances: by 2016, over 4.9 million English learners (almost 10% of all students) were enrolled in public schools across the country ([Department of Education, NCES](#)). Twenty-seven states have ELL enrollment higher than 6.0%, with California topping the list at 20%. Importantly, these figures don't include the many students who fail to qualify as ELL, but who still speak a different language at home. For many educators, ELL or multilingual students are the majority population in their schools. Yet, despite a numerical majority in some places, often these students still experience [Minoritization](#); their languages and everyday experiences are neglected, rejected, or hidden during classroom interactions.

You can also frame why language use matters in terms of the implications and benefits for students. If you are a teacher, you probably want all your students to feel comfortable in your classroom; you also want them to be successful and prepared for the world outside of school. For culturally and linguistically diverse students, everyday language use can serve both those purposes. Take a look at the benefits below.

Benefits of Everyday Language Use

- Helps all students feel welcomed and valued in the classroom
- Students are more willing to participate; open language environment encourages students to ask questions, especially those that are language-related
- Teaching students to read in their home language and English simultaneously [promotes higher reading achievement](#) in English, compared to teaching students to read in English exclusively
- Provides new vocabulary for both students and teacher
- Promotes bilingualism as a valuable resource
- Helps English learners work through complex ideas and express opinions, via writing and speaking
- Builds connections between vocabulary and grammar structures of school language and everyday/home language
- Builds positive cultural identities related to certain subjects (e.g., math), especially important for subjects that are culturally stereotyped
- Fosters collaborations and support between students that share home language
- Helps students sense that a teacher understands and knows them (connecting language and identity)
- Yields stronger ELL outcomes in English

Everyday language use facilitates instruction. Language is the vehicle for learning—via content, discussion, feedback, and motivation. Everyday language use “greases the wheels” for minoritized students, facilitating participation, academic engagement, and understanding. As students recognize their everyday language being welcomed and/or spoken in the classroom, they become more motivated to participate and feel safer asking questions to clarify meaning, especially when misunderstandings are language-related. Everyday language use enables children to connect content in their native language or vernacular to school language, creating valuable context for learning. The positive impact of everyday language use is not limited to achievement; it fosters more positive peer interactions and perceptions of ability, all of which enable successful learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Everyday language use enhances social relations. Teachers have a responsibility not only to instruct their students, but also to develop positive relationships with each child. Relationships and instructional engagement go hand in hand.

When a teacher takes the time to inquire after and use students' everyday languages, they foster a closer relationship with those students and convey affective support. Students will feel acknowledged and seen in the classroom as it takes on a more conversational and "family-like" atmosphere (Bonner, 2014). Everyday language use also improves student relationships because their differences are open and appreciated, rather than hidden or made taboo. And it doesn't just help student-to-teacher relationships—students that have the same or similar everyday languages are able to collaborate together and find extra support when they need it.

Everyday language use reinforces positive cultural identities. School instruction in the US isn't really culture neutral, though it has traditionally been depicted that way. Even at young ages, students are developing cultural identities in the context of subjects like math and reading, and teachers' interaction styles can help shape those identities positively. This is especially true with language use, because language and cultural identity are closely tied. By incorporating everyday language, teachers give students the opportunity to talk about their own culture and associate success with their language, reinforcing just how important their identities are both in society and in the classroom. Everyday language use conveys to students that their languages are assets, not deficits (Abdulrahim & Orosco, 2020), helping them shed negative cultural stereotypes, reconstrue failure, and develop a more confident self-image (Blackley, 2019).

What Everyday Language Use is Not

Only Adding Ethnic Names to Word Problems

Consider the fairly common practice of adding "ethnic" names to word problems in an effort to be more culturally inclusive. While changing a character's name from John to Juan is not a bad thing to do, this fairly perfunctory effort may not have much impact on a Latino student's experience with math.

While almost any kind of effort made to improve the cultural competency of instruction is worthwhile, it is important to understand the difference between minimal efforts and the kind of practices the CASI's Language Use dimension measures. The CASI generally sets a higher standard than token efforts can satisfy. This doesn't mean Language Use must be very hard to "count"; it just means that Language Use efforts should demonstrate concerned interest in the lives of your students. The next section of the chapter (Indicators) should give you some good ideas.

Cultural Appropriation

When it comes to Language Use, teachers may also worry about cultural appropriation (in this case, offending students by adopting their language without fully understanding the context or cultural practice). This is normal, but it may be less of an issue than you think. Consider this experience from one of your book's authors:

Mrs. Bonham's Spanish

"Many teachers are worried about cultural appropriation and offending students, and these are valid concerns. But often, teachers are more concerned about this than students actually are. An experience from my elementary school years in Texas illustrates this: Mrs. Bonham (pseudonym), my fourth grade teacher, often used words such as "mija" and incorporated Spanish language in her classroom. As a student who grew up in a Spanish speaking home while learning English, I enjoyed seeing how my own teacher used my everyday language in her classroom. Even though she wasn't perfect at it, I rarely felt that it was inappropriate—in fact, I admired her efforts. Even my younger sister, who initially thought it was a little weird, eventually came to love Mrs. Bonham's use of Spanish. Although it seemed silly at first, teachers who used my everyday language had the biggest impact on me because they created a comfortable learning environment."

— Jocelin Meza

Here are some principles that will help you have an impact like Mrs. Bonham and use student language in a respectful way:

- Remember, in our hundreds of hours of observation in diverse classrooms, very few (if any) minoritized students have been offended by a teacher's efforts to use their language.
- **Awkwardness may stem from not openly acknowledging language differences.** Avoid this problem by being open about language differences in the classroom and validating/explaining their use.
- **Everyday language use should always have a relational or instructional purpose.** This is important. Adopting African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to express affection or discuss concepts is probably appropriate; co-opting AAVE for memes on the board probably isn't.
- **Your disposition goes a long way.** Students can tell when a teacher is trying to be sincere, genuine, empathetic, and inclusive; seek to be humbly (and perhaps vocally) aware of your own language and limitations, and persist through difficulty! (Remember Jocelin's sister, described above.)

Learning Check

Hopefully we have convinced you that language use matters. Based on what you've learned so far, which of the following statements do you think best defines language use?

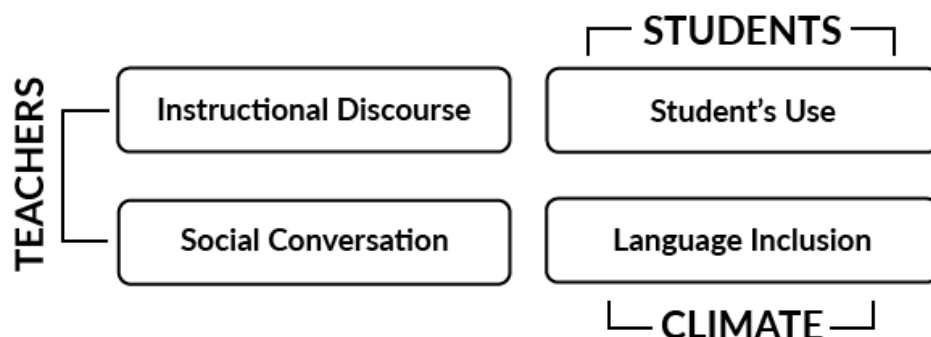
- ☐ How teachers use age-appropriate speech in the classroom to enhance instruction.
- ☐ How teachers help students move from basic interpersonal communicative skills to cognitive academic language proficiency.
- ☐ How teachers and students communicate with one another through different modes of communication (e.g. visuals, gestures).
- ☐ How teachers and students use everyday language and language varieties in the classroom for instruction and conversation.

Looking Ahead

Before you move on, consider:

- What do you think language use will look like in classroom practice?
- If you were asked to evaluate how "connected" a lesson was based on a video recording, what would you look for right now?

The 4 Indicators of Language Use



So, now that we've reviewed why everyday Language Use matters, where do you begin? What does everyday Language Use look like day-to-day, and how can you start practicing it within your current circumstances?

The [Classroom Assessment of Sociocultural Interactions \(CASI\)](#) divides Language Use into four indicators: **Instructional Discourse**, **Social Conversation**, **Students' Use**, and **Language Inclusion**. The first two are teacher-focused, the third is student-focused, and the fourth is climate-focused. We'll discuss each one in turn, giving you the definition, the rubric, and examples.

Instructional Discourse

To what extent do you use everyday language (dialects, vernaculars, creoles, languages) while presenting lessons, leading discussions, or giving instructional feedback?

Note

- This indicator relates to your instructional conversations (e.g., content) with students, not your social conversations (e.g., affection, discipline).
- [This video from a 5th grade class in LA](#) shows a teacher focusing his instruction on everyday language. Note that your lesson doesn't have to be about everyday language in order to make use of everyday language.
- If you are worried about cultural appropriation, see our extended note in "Why Language Use Matters" above.

	Disconnected (1)	Somewhat Connected (3)	Well-Connected (5)
1a. Instructional Discourse	Teacher does not use everyday language in instructional discourse.	Teacher sometimes uses everyday language in instructional discourse.	Teacher often uses everyday language in instructional discourse.

- Presents content in everyday language
- Incorporates everyday language in discussion
- Provides feedback in everyday language

Instructional Discourse Examples

Standard: Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction ([NGSS.S.4.LS1.1](#)).

Context: Mrs. Born is a fourth grade Title I teacher in Miami, Florida with a mix of Haitian, Brazilian, Latino, and White students. Mrs. Born is teaching a unit based on the structure and function of different plant and animal parts. She compares the external structure of a butterfly to that of a frog to demonstrate how organisms' diverse structures help them survive.

Instructional Discourse (1): Mrs. Born displays pictures of a butterfly and a frog. She has students identify the similarities and differences between each organism. As Mrs. Born walks around the room she hears a student say that a butterfly has wings to help it get its food. Mrs. Born proceeds to show a video on butterflies and talks about how frogs are amphibians while butterflies are insects.

Instructional Discourse (2): Mrs. Born displays pictures of a butterfly and a frog. She has students identify the similarities and differences between each organism. As Mrs. Born walks around the room she hears a student say that a butterfly has wings to help it get its food. "*Wassup, you got it!*" she says, and proceeds to show a video on butterflies as she talks about how frogs are amphibians while butterflies are insects.

Instructional Discourse (3): Mrs. Born displays pictures of a butterfly and a frog. She has students identify the similarities and differences between each organism. As Mrs. Born walks around the room she hears a student say that a butterfly has wings to help it get its food. "Oh yeah, nice!" she says. She proceeds to show a video of a butterfly taken in Brazil, narrated with some Portuguese words, and talks about how frogs are amphibians while butterflies are insects.

Instructional Discourse (4): Mrs. Born displays pictures of a butterfly and a frog. Many of her students speak Portuguese, so she decides to write "butterfly" and "frog" in Portuguese and English on the board. She has students identify similarities and differences between a *borboleta* (butterfly) and a *sapo* (frog). As Mrs. Born walks around the classroom, she hears a student say, "Butterflies have wings to help it get its food." She responds, "*Hey, you right!*" and talks about how frogs are amphibians while butterflies are insects.

Instructional Discourse (5): Mrs. Born displays pictures of a butterfly and a frog. Many of her students speak the Portuguese and Haitian Creole, so she decides to write "butterfly" and "frog" in Portuguese and English on the board. She has students identify the similarities and differences between a *borboleta* (butterfly) and a *sapo* (frog). As Mrs. Born walks around the room, she hears a student say that a borboleta has wings to help it get its food; she responds, "*Sim! Boa!*" (Yes, nice one!). A Haitian student shares that frogs are widely seen throughout Haiti, especially closer to the water. Mrs. Born thanks her student for sharing with a Creole word she learned: "*mési.*"

Learning Check

Which of the following is NOT a way Mrs. Born could incorporate students' everyday language into **her own** instruction?

- ☐ Ask students to share with her other words for 'life cycle' they know
- ☐ Encourage students to tell their table how they say butterfly or frog in their home language.
- ☐ Use Haitian Creole, Portuguese, or another everyday language when commenting on student assignments.
- ☐ Use everyday vocabulary to talk about how life cycles are different like our languages are.

Social Conversation

To what extent do you use everyday language in social conversations with students, like expressing affection, discipline, or encouragement? What kind of everyday language do you use when talking to students one-on-one?

Note

E.g., addressing a Latina student as *mija*, learning how to say "thank you" or explain classroom rules using Mandarin, or adopting elements of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) while encouraging a Black student.

	Disconnected (1)	Somewhat Connected (3)	Well-Connected (5)
1b. Social Conversation	Teacher does not use everyday language for social conversation.	Teacher sometimes uses everyday language for social conversation.	Teacher often uses everyday language for social conversation
• Expresses affection in everyday language			
• Reinforces rules or discipline in everyday language			
• Provides encouragement in everyday language			

Social Conversation Examples

Standard: Identify the role of religion in the development of human civilization ([ICS.6-9.GWH.1.9](#)).

Context: Miss Daniels is a sixth grade teacher at a Title 1 school in Boise, Idaho. She has a majority-white class with several African American students and children of South Asian refugees. They are studying how religion has affected the development of civilization. Miss Daniels is having the class discuss in groups the role religion has played in their own lives to activate their background knowledge.

Social Conversation (1): Miss Daniels walks around the room, listening in on the students' conversations. As she walks around, she asks some of the students about their experiences. One student shares that growing up, religion was always part of her family culture. It affected the holidays they celebrated and how they spent their weekends. Miss Daniels thanks her students for being willing to share their experiences with her.

Social Conversation (2): As Miss Daniels walks around the room listening to conversations, she notices one student seems very nervous about sharing with the rest of her group. She knows this student has some anxiety about speaking in front of others. Miss Daniels walks up to her, puts a hand on her shoulder and whispers with a smile, *"Get it girl, you got this!"* She moves on and asks another student to share their experience with religion.

Social Conversation (3): Miss Daniels walks around the room and asks students about their experiences with religion. As she listens to some students discuss, she makes sure to thank them for being willing to share their experiences with the class. She learned how to say "Good job" in Vietnamese for one of her English learners to encourage her and help her feel welcome in the class. She also learned how to say "chair" in Vietnamese and uses it with a smile to remind one of her more excitable students where he should be during discussion time.

Social Conversation (4): As Miss Daniel walks around the room, she hears one boy say his family does not believe in religion so it has had no effect on his life. She approaches the student and says, "Let me *aks* you a question," and proceeds to ask him about some words in the Constitution of the United States that refer to God. He thinks about his statement and decides his life is somewhat affected by religion. Miss Daniels smiles and says, *"That's what I'm talkin' 'bout, good thinking!"*

Social Conversation (5): While students are discussing at their tables, Miss Daniels walks around the room, asking students about their experiences. She approaches a student from Vietnam, whom she greets in the little Vietnamese she has learned so far this year, and asks about her experience with religion. After she shares, Miss Daniels smiles and says, *"Cám ơn bạn"* (thank you). When some students start talking too loud and Miss Daniels has to talk to them, she ends the interchange with, *"We straight?"* and the students nod their heads.

Learning Check

What are some ways Miss Daniels could incorporate everyday language into her social conversation that you didn't see in the example?

Students' Use

To what extent do your students initiate and reciprocate everyday language use with you or their peers? Is everyday language (e.g., home language, dialects) a normal part of their classroom conversations?

Note

- This indicator measures how students are initiating/reciprocating use of everyday language themselves, rather than just responding to your use. This indicator might especially include how they use language with each other, during activities or play.
- Code-switching: when a student alternates between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation. This “moving-between” is more of an external view of a speaker’s language use.
- Translanguaging: when a bilingual student draws from their entire language repertoire, including language that is not usually legitimized in school, to demonstrate what they know and can do. This “moving-beyond” is more of an internal view of a speaker’s language use.
- For more detail on these practices, see [this interview with Dr. Ofelia García](#) of CUNY.

	Disconnected (1)	Somewhat Connected (3)	Well-Connected (5)
1c. Students' Use	Students do not use everyday language with teacher or peers.	Students sometimes use everyday language with teacher or peers.	Students often use everyday language with teacher and peers.
• Initiate use of everyday language			
• Reciprocate use			
• Code-switch			
• Translanguage			

Students' Use Examples

Standard: Understand that shapes in different categories (e.g., rhombuses, rectangles, and others) may share attributes (e.g., having four sides), and that the shared attributes can define a larger category (e.g., quadrilaterals). Recognize rhombuses, rectangles, and squares as examples of quadrilaterals, and draw examples of quadrilaterals that do not belong to any of these subcategories ([CCSS.Math.Content.3.G.A.](#)).

Context: Mr. Robles is a third grade teacher in the Bronx, New York. He teaches a class of mostly Puerto Rican students with some Latino and African American students. His class is learning about 2D shapes and how to identify quadrilaterals.

Students' Use (1): Students are sorting different shapes in groups and identifying which shapes are quadrilaterals. Students discuss which shapes are quadrilaterals based on their attributes. As students sort shapes, Mr. Robles reminds them that quadrilaterals are shapes with four vertices. In groups of four, students sort shapes. One student says, "This shape has three sides, that's not a quadrilateral." Another student says "This has four sides, it is a quadrilateral!"

Students' Use (2): Students are sorting different shapes in groups and identifying which shapes are quadrilaterals. Students discuss which shapes are quadrilaterals based on their attributes. A student grabs a rhombus and says, "*Este es un* quadrilateral" while another student grabs a triangle and says "This not a quadrilateral, *it only got three sides.*"

Students' Use (3): Students are sorting different shapes in groups and identifying which shapes are quadrilaterals. Students discuss which shapes are quadrilaterals based on their attributes. A student grabs a parallelogram, and says, "This is a quadrilateral!" Another student at her table responds by saying, "*Por qué?*" She points to the sides while counting and says, "*Quatro* sides."

Students' Use (4): Students are sorting different shapes in groups and identifying which shapes are quadrilaterals. Mr. Robles approaches a group that has trouble deciding if a trapezoid is a quadrilateral. Mr. Robles says, "*Chicos*, how many sides does a quadrilateral have?" A student responds by saying, "*Quatro* sides." As the group analyzes the trapezoid, they each count the sides. A student says "*Es un* quadrilateral," and another student builds on it saying, "*Porque tiene* four!"

Students' Use (5): Students are sorting different shapes in groups and identifying which shapes are quadrilaterals. Mr. Robles approaches a group that has trouble deciding if a trapezoid is a quadrilateral. Mr. Robles says, "*Chicos*, how many sides does a quadrilateral have?" A student responds by saying, "Well, the beginning of the word quadrilateral sounds like *quatro* or four." "Good job," says Mr. Robles "a quadrilateral does have four sides." As the group analyzes the trapezoid one more time, each student counts the sides. "*Es un quadrilateral*" says a student, while another student builds on the comment saying, "*Porque tiene* four sides!"

Learning Check

Which is the best example of Students' Use?

- ☐ At Mr. Robles' insistence, the students count the sides in Spanish.
- ☐ The students use Spanish freely in both peer and whole class conversations.
- ☐ When Mr. Robles speaks to the students in Spanish, the students respond in Spanish.

Language Inclusion

To what extent is your classroom a place that students can feel encouraged to use their everyday language? How do you ask them about parts of their language? How do you incorporate and affirm everyday language in learning activities?

Note

Some special features of this indicator might be:

- asking students how they say something in their language, or asking about vocabulary from their out-of-school experiences (e.g., activities, food, traditions)
- activities that incorporate different languages/vernaculars
- creating a classroom environment (e.g., posters, books) that appeals to diverse languages

	Disconnected (1)	Somewhat Connected (3)	Well-Connected (5)
1d. Language Inclusion	The classroom environment does not include everyday language.	The classroom sometimes includes everyday language.	The classroom often includes everyday language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquiry about everyday language• Activity incorporates everyday language• Encourages and affirms students' use of everyday language			

Language Inclusion Examples

Standard: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4](#)).

Context: Mrs. Williams teaches fifth grade at a Title I school in Dearborn, Michigan. She teaches a class of mostly white students with some African American, Latino, and Syrian refugee students. Her students are working in groups to peer edit their in-class presentations for the upcoming week.

Language Inclusion (1): Mrs. Williams walks around to the different groups of students and asks them about the presentation they are reviewing. She reminds the students to always be courteous and kind when giving feedback. She encourages the students to discuss feedback as a group and to take notes of the suggestions given about their own presentation.

Language Inclusion (2): Mrs. Williams walks around the classroom talking with various groups. At the beginning of the year she had the students fill out a survey about their home language. She often asks students about words or phrases in their everyday language as well. She feels the students' background is important to understand to help them grow. While talking with the students about their presentations, she keeps in mind their individual needs and strengths while giving feedback.

Language Inclusion (3): Mrs. Williams heads to her group of English learners first. She allowed this group of students to decide if they wanted to work together on this assignment or be divided. She knows much of the group speaks Spanish while the rest speak Syrian. She encourages the students to use their everyday language if it helps them to understand the assignment, give feedback, and clarify meaning.

Language Inclusion (4): Mrs. Williams asks the various groups about the presentations they are reviewing. She encourages the students to use their everyday language when planning the assignment and giving feedback. She even encourages students to include words or phrases from their everyday language in their final presentation.

Language Inclusion (5): Mrs. Williams walks around to the different groups. She has asked the students about words and phrases in their everyday language/vernacular throughout the year. She often allows students to choose their groups for activities like this one so they feel comfortable and can discuss in their everyday language. Mrs. Williams encourages students to do outlines and rough drafts in their everyday language and even to include it in their final presentation as long as it is mostly in Standard English.

Learning Check

Which of the following are ways Mrs. Williams can include everyday language in her classroom climate?

- ☐ Visit her students at home to observe their everyday language use.
- ☐ Have a word wall with phrases from diverse languages that can be referenced.
- ☐ Add dual language or bilingual books to the reading area.
- ☐ Discuss different languages in class and how they are an important part of who we are.

Language Use Scenario: Mr. Bradley's Class Counts Coins

Each chapter in this book includes three versions of a teaching scenario to illustrate the dimension and its indicators. In this chapter, we enter our classroom with Mr. Bradley in Sacramento. Here is some context for his background, classroom, and setting:

Mr. James Bradley is a 35-year-old Black male teacher at a Title 1 elementary school in Sacramento. His class has a large number of Latino and Hmong students, in addition to several White and African American students. Mr. Bradley's school is in a less-affluent area of Sacramento and his classroom has limited resources. Students sit together in table groups and can use a rug area for discussions and reading. There are no computers in Mr. Bradley's classroom.

Mr. Bradley himself is from Florida and graduated from Florida A&M. After graduation (10 years ago), he moved across the country to take a teaching job in Sacramento and has taught a few different grades at two schools in the area. He now teaches second grade in a diverse community, where he and his wife Layla (also a teacher) are raising their daughter.

Mr. Bradley knows how uncommon black male teachers are, so he looks for opportunities to break down barriers for his students. That's part of why he likes teaching second grade—it gives him the chance to foster positive views of race, language, and potential in his students before they get too fixed in their cultural mindsets.

Scenario Introduction

Mr. Bradley has previously taught his second grade students about different kinds of currency values, including dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies. Today he is reviewing the names and values of each kind of currency to prepare the students to solve word problems involving money, fulfilling this Common Core standard:

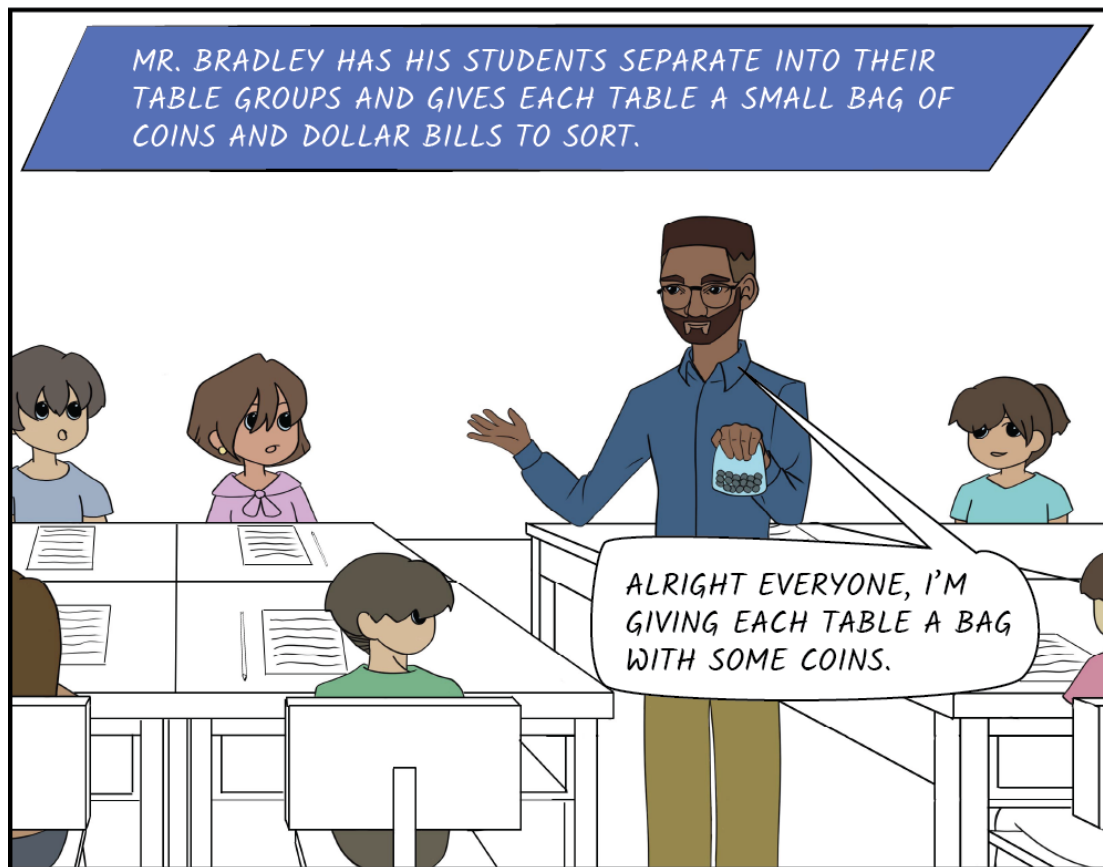
[CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.2.MD.C.8](#)

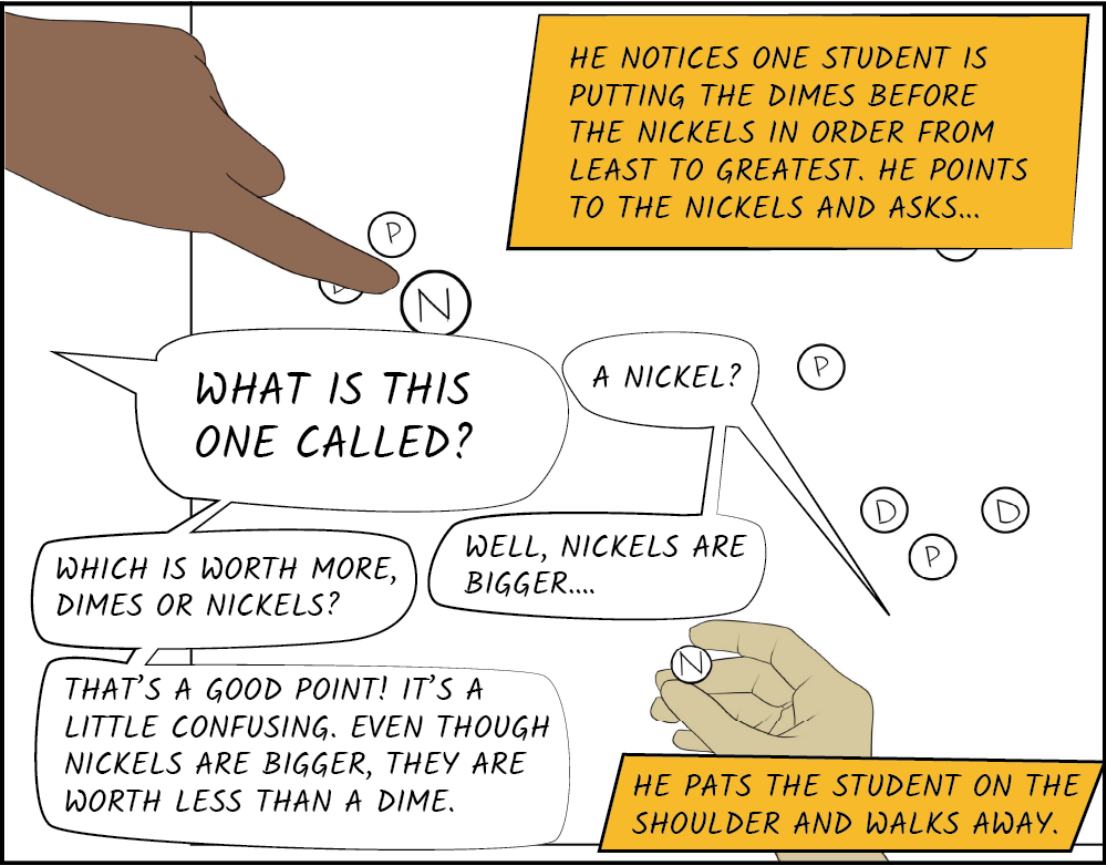
Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies, using \$ and ¢ symbols appropriately. Example: If you have 2 dimes and 3 pennies, how many cents do you have?

Note: Evaluating Teaching Examples

Remember that effective **generic** teaching practices and effective **cultural** teaching practices can be different. In our scenarios across this book, you will find teachers using effective **generic practices** without necessarily being highly **meaningful or socioculturally connected**. Our goal is not to replace effective generic practice; rather, we seek to show how culturally connected and equitable practices can be integrated with generic practice to make meaning in the lives of your students. Pay attention to the differences!

Version 1: Disconnected





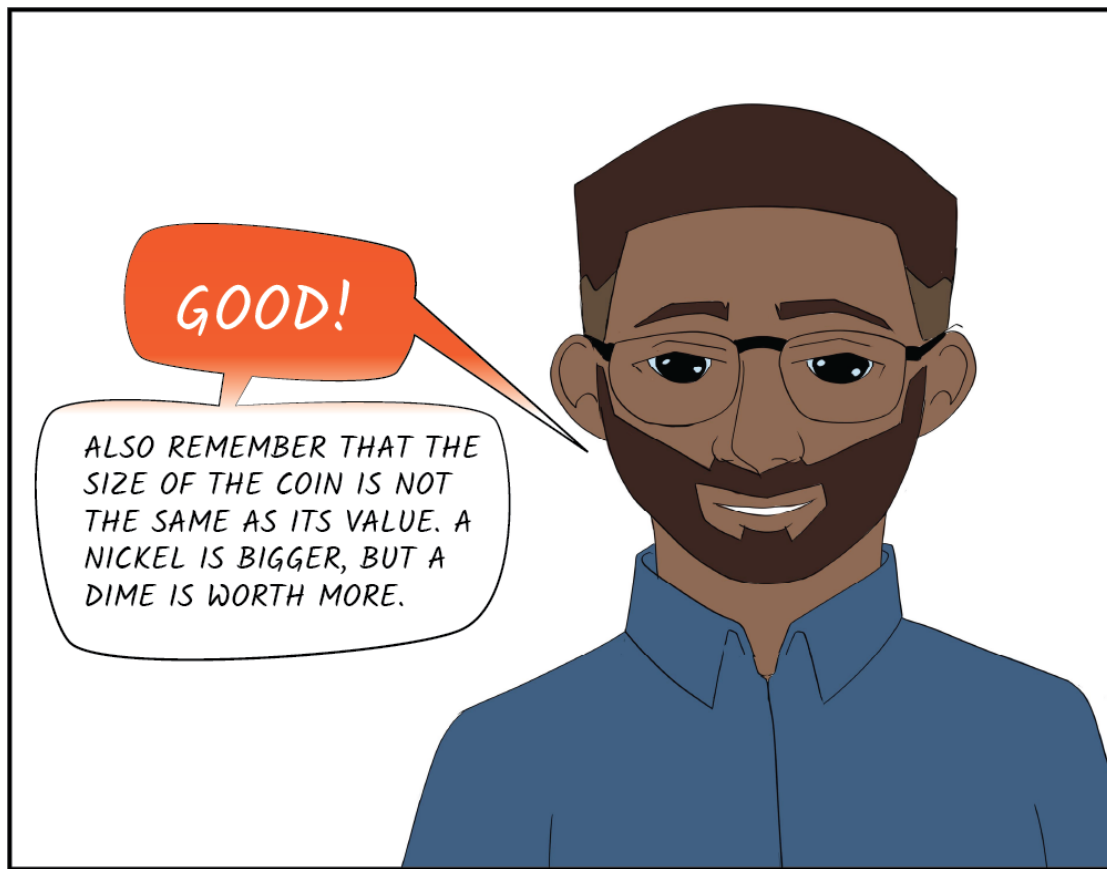
HE NOTICES THAT MOST OF THE GROUPS ARE DONE SORTING THE COINS AND GETS THEIR ATTENTION.

ALRIGHT CLASS, I NOTICED THAT MOST OF YOU ARRANGED YOUR COINS AS PENNIES, NICKELS, DIMES, QUARTERS, AND DOLLAR BILLS.

HOW DID YOU KNOW HOW TO ARRANGE THEM?

WELL I KNOW THE PENNY IS THE BROWN ONE, AND THAT'S THE SMALLEST. ALL THE SILVER ONES ARE WORTH MORE.

MY TEACHER TAUGHT ME, 'NICKEL, NICKEL, THICK AND FAT, YOU'RE WORTH 5, I KNOW THAT!'



Transcript

Version 1 Explanation

Why do we say this example is *"disconnected"*?

Instructional Discourse

Although there is instructional time, Mr. Bradley does not include students' everyday language in his discussion about the coins' values or his feedback. (1)

Social Conversation

Mr. Bradley is not observed using students' everyday language to express affection, provide encouragement, or reinforce classroom rules. (1)

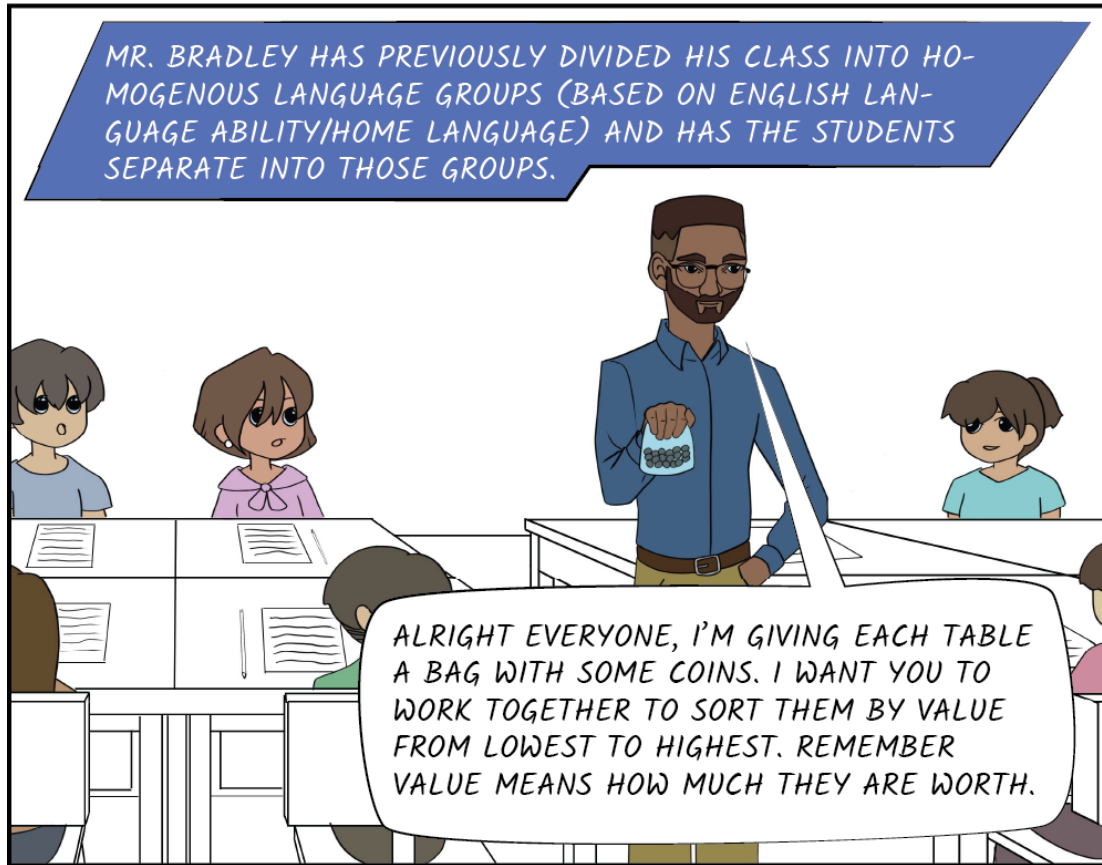
Students' Use

Students are not observed initiating or reciprocating use of their everyday language. There is no code-switching or translanguaging observed either. (1)

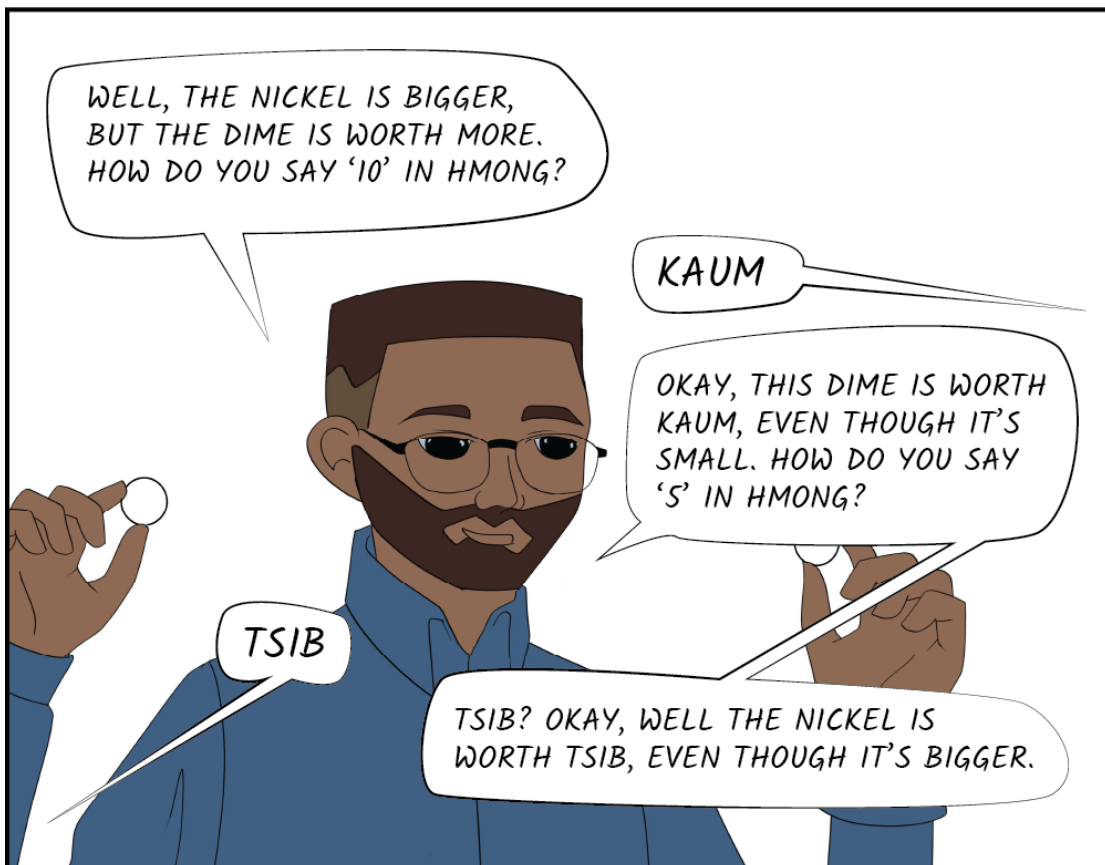
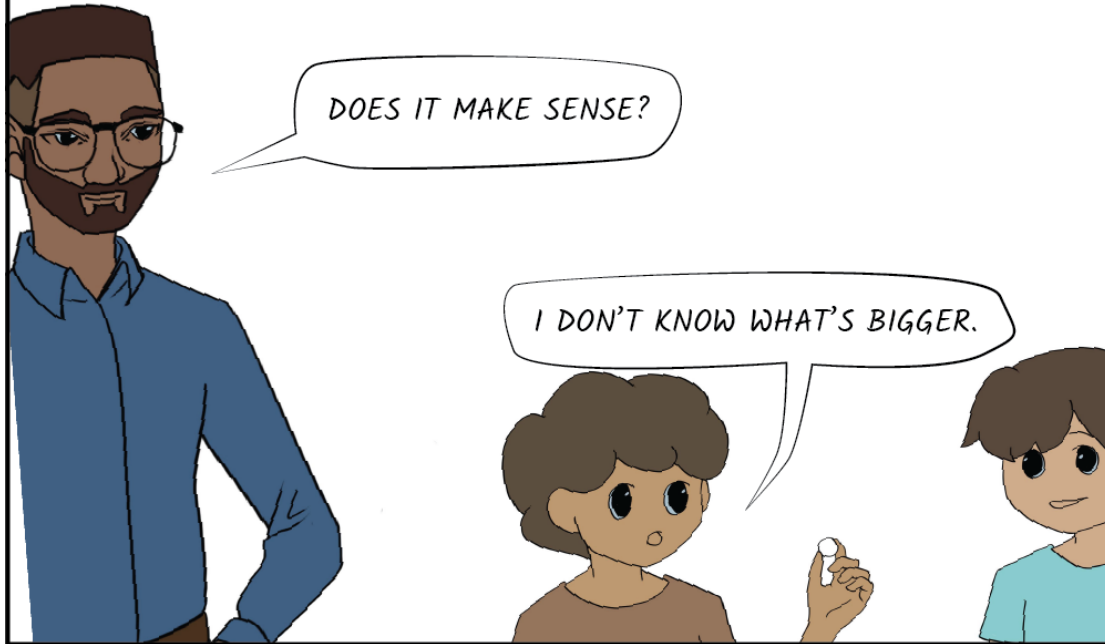
Language Inclusion

There is no inquiry about students' everyday language observed. The activity does not include everyday language and its use is not encouraged nor affirmed. (1)

Version 2: Somewhat Connected



AS THE GROUPS START WORKING ON SORTING THE COINS, MR. BRADLEY WALKS AROUND THE CLASSROOM VISITING THE GROUPS. HE NOTICES TWO HMONG STUDENTS ARE LOOKING AT THE NICKELS AND DIMES WITH CONFUSION. HE APPROACHES THEM WITH A SMILE.



MR. BRADLEY LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM AND NOTICES MOST OF THE STUDENTS HAVE FINISHED. HE GETS THE CLASS'S ATTENTION.

LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE HAS THEIR COINS IN THE RIGHT ORDER. EVE AND CAI REALIZED THAT EVEN THOUGH THE NICKEL IS BIGGER, THE DIME IS WORTH MORE. HOW DID YOU SAY S, AGAIN?

AND IO WAS KAUM, RIGHT?

TSIB!

THE STUDENTS NOD.

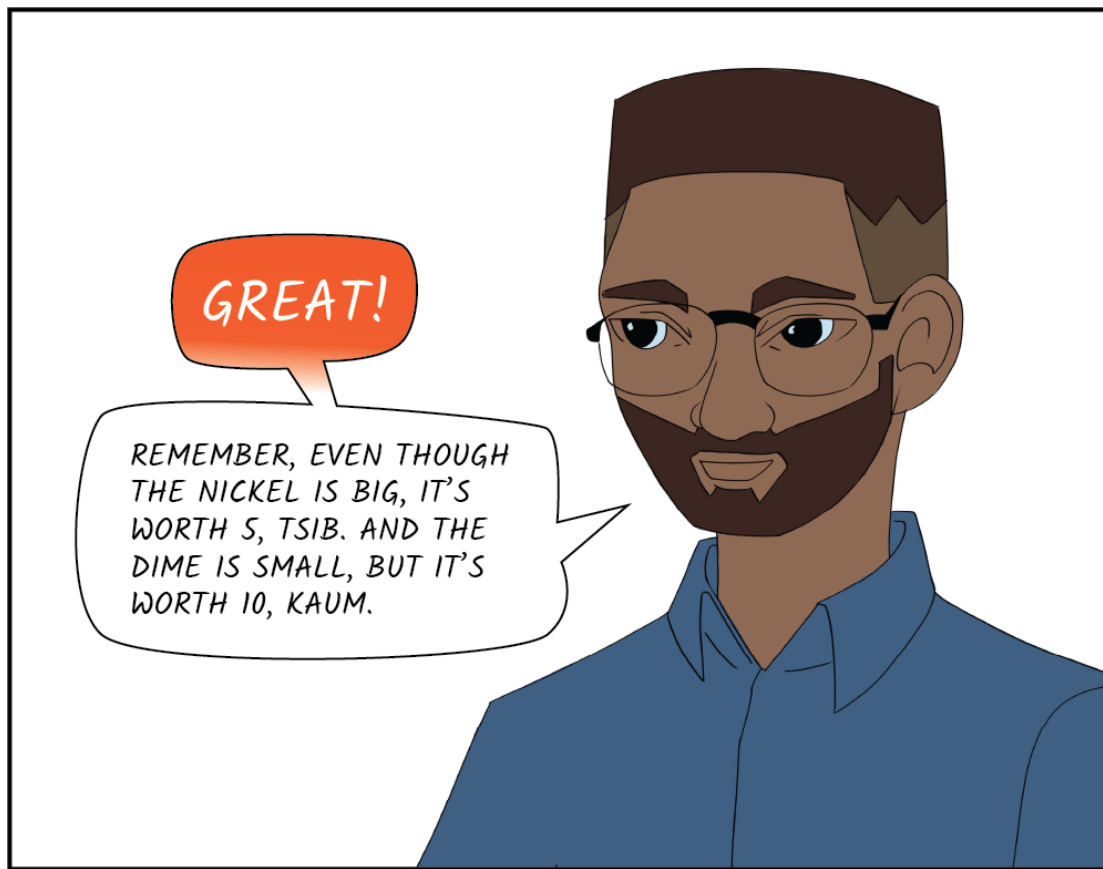
OKAY, LET'S LEARN SOME NEW WORDS. EVERYONE SAY IT WITH ME.

MR. BRADLEY HOLDS UP A NICKEL AND THE WHOLE CLASS SAYS...

TSIB

NEXT, HE HOLDS UP THE DIME AND THE CLASS SAYS...

KAUM



Transcript

Version 2 Explanation

Why do we say this example is *"somewhat connected"*?

Instructional Discourse

Mr. Bradley teaches content using the students' everyday language, Hmong, and provides feedback using it. (4)

Social Conversation

Mr. Bradley is not observed expressing affection or providing encouragement in the students' everyday language. (1)

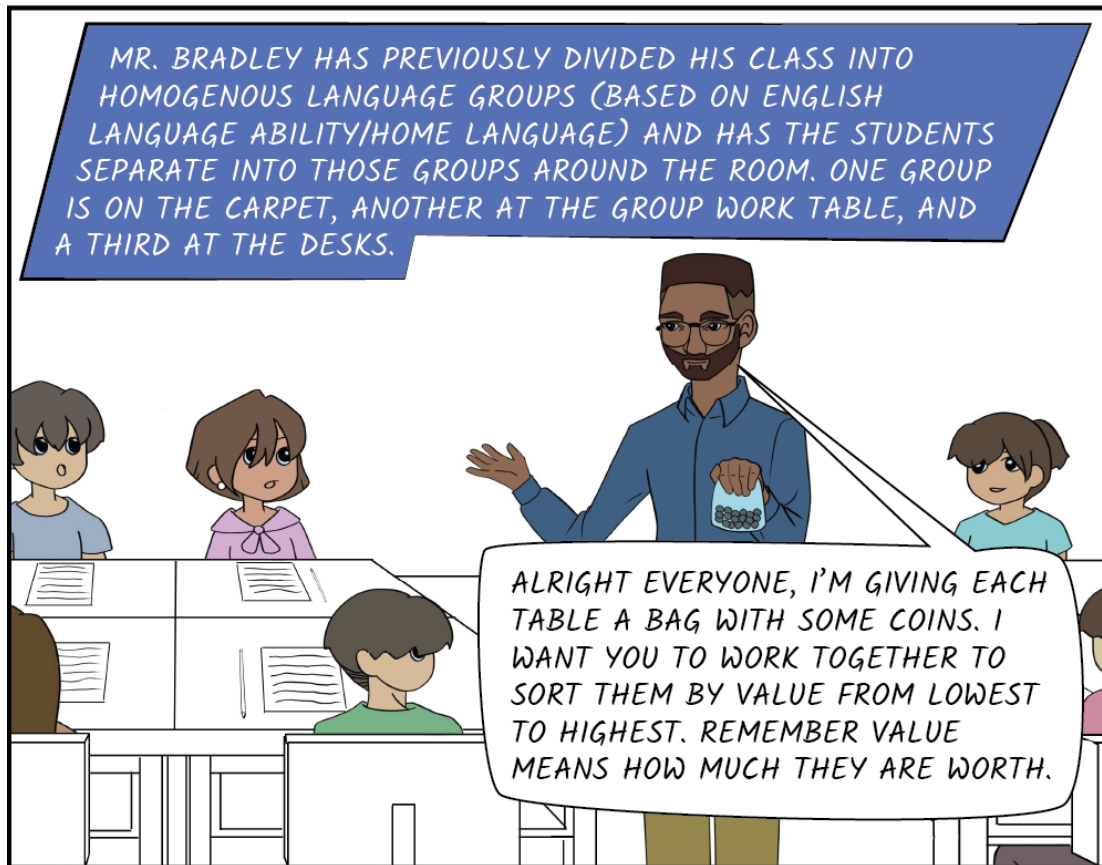
Students' Use

Students use their everyday language when the teacher asks them to, but otherwise are not observed code-switching or translanguaging. (3)

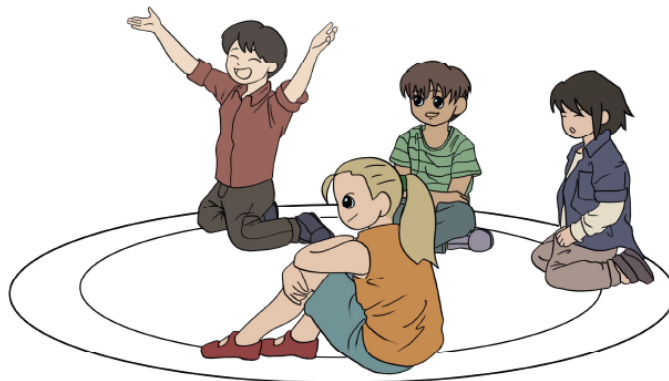
Language Inclusion

Mr. Bradley inquires about students' everyday language by asking how to say 5 and 10 in Hmong and in that way partially incorporates it in the activity. However, everyday language use is not encouraged. (3)

Version 3: Well-Connected



AS THE GROUPS START WORKING ON SORTING THE COINS, MR. BRADLEY WALKS AROUND THE CLASSROOM VISITING THE GROUPS. A YOUNG LATINO BOY SITTING AT THE CARPET IS BEING A LITTLE TOO LOUD, SO MR. BRADLEY MOTIONS HIM OVER.



MIJO, WHAT'S THE RULE ABOUT YELLING IN THE CLASSROOM?

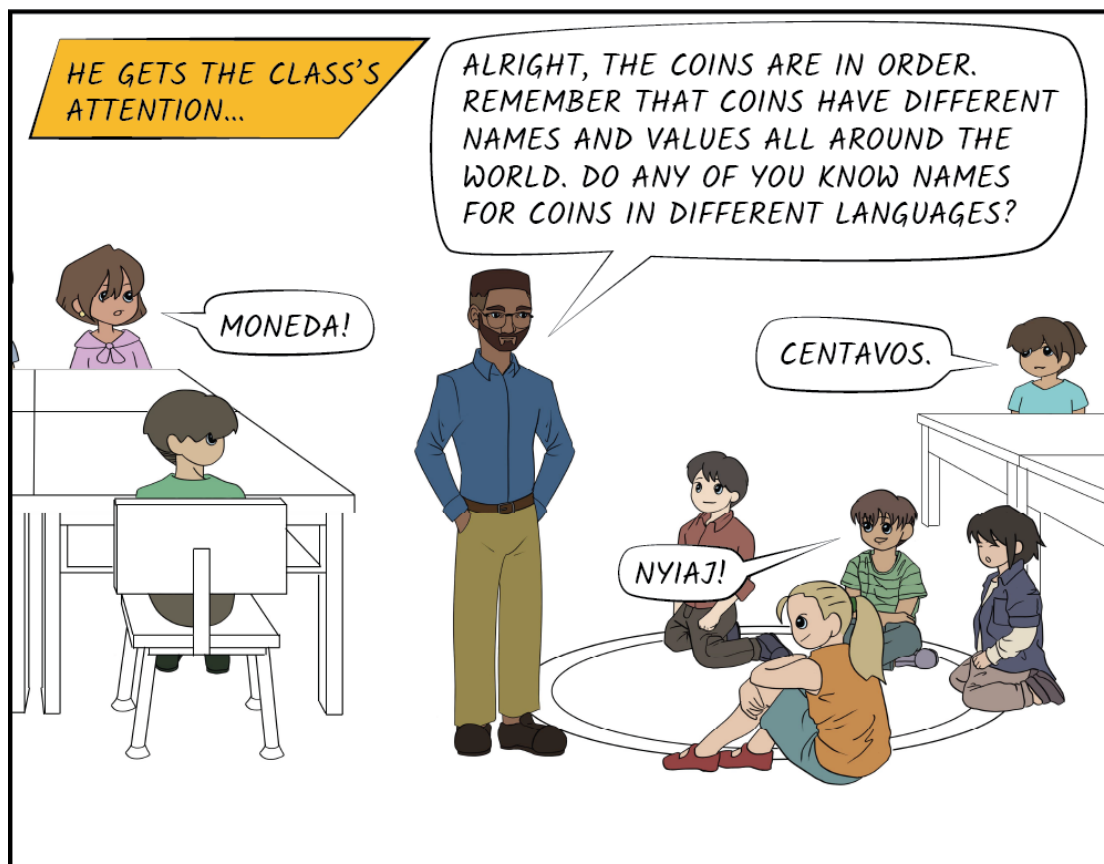
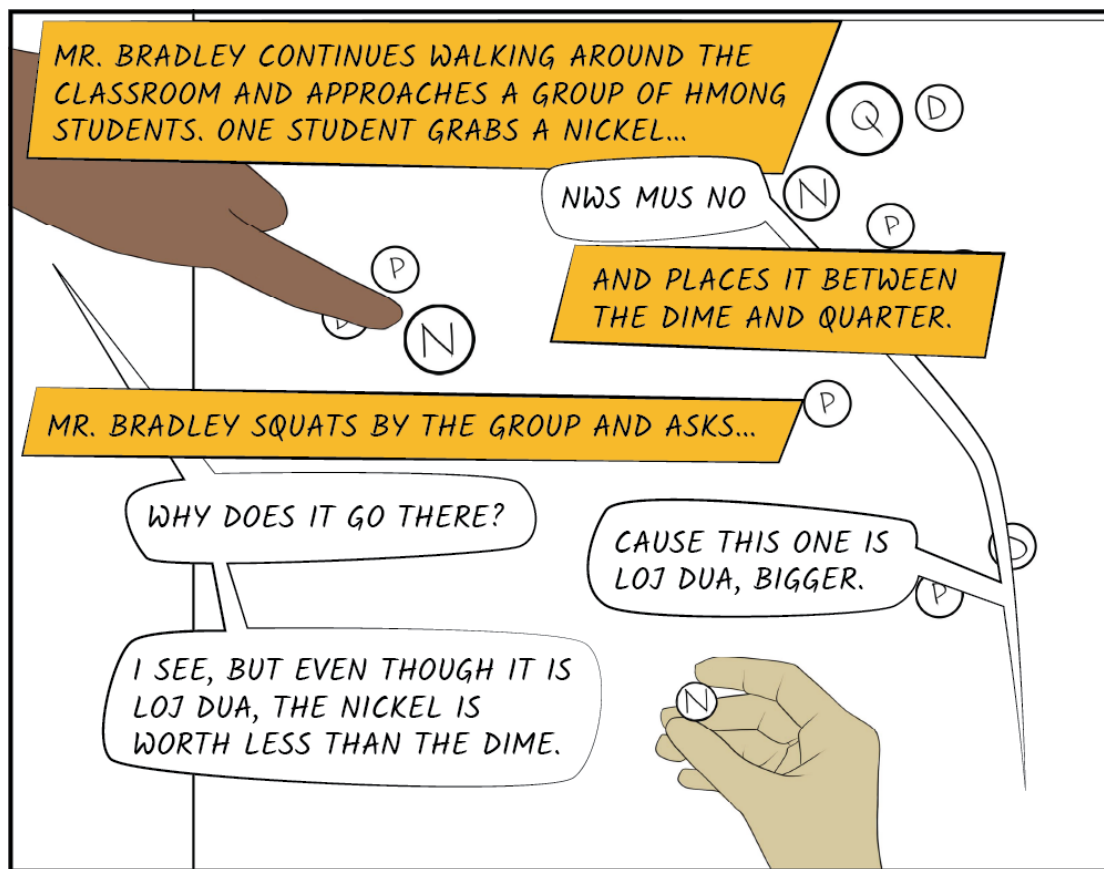
INSIDE VOICE

RIIIGHT, INSIDE VOICE.
VOZ BAJA.

MR. BRADLEY SMILES

BACK TO YOUR GROUP.







[Transcript](#)

Version 3 Explanation

Why do we say this example is “well-connected”?

Instructional Discourse

When talking to the Hmong students, Mr. Bradley uses their everyday language to teach them that dimes are worth more even though nickels are bigger. He also incorporates it into the discussion about coins at the end of the lesson. (4)

Social Conversation

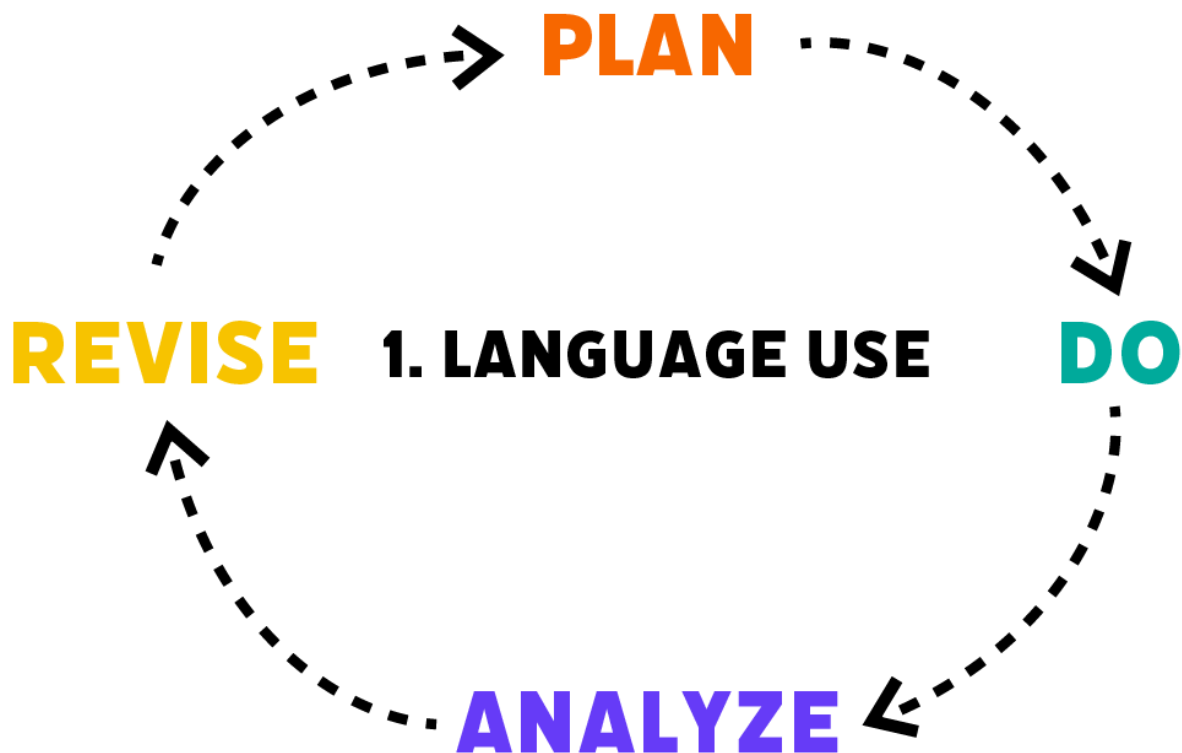
Mr. Bradley expresses affection for the Latino student and reinforces the classroom rules in his everyday language (4)

Students' Use

The Hmong student initiates use of his everyday language and translanguages. The students also reciprocate use of everyday language and are observed code-switching. (5)

Language Inclusion

Mr. Bradley is not observed inquiring about everyday language, but he does try to include it in the activity. He also encourages the students' use of their everyday language. (4)



Practicing Language Use: PDAR

Now that you have reviewed the theory, indicators, and examples of Language Use, it's time to practice in your own classroom.

Below you will find PDAR guides to help you integrate what you've learned into practice, either by yourself or with other teachers.

If you have a Hypothesis account (or create one), you can sign in at the top right corner of this page. This will enable you to annotate and make notes for your PDAR plan. We have also included worksheets below that you can download, fill in, and share. Do what works best for you!

1. Download PDAR Worksheet - [Version A \(Google Doc\)](#).
2. Download PDAR Worksheet - [Version B \(pdf\)](#) | [Version B \(Google Doc\)](#).
3. Open [Language Use CASI rubric \(Google Doc\)](#).
4. Download Self/Peer Observation document ([Google Doc](#)) ([PDF](#))

PDAR At-a-Glance

Plan

1. Identify the upcoming lesson or unit you'd like to work on
2. Review the Language Use indicators with your lesson(s) in mind
3. Identify your "look fors"—what you expect and hope to see
4. Plan your observations, alone or with others

Do

1. Work from your plan (try to reach your goals, but be flexible)
2. Consider recording multiple observations and multiple forms of data (scores, field notes, etc.)

Analyze

1. Record and review what happened, either solo or with your observers
2. Analyze how each indicator showed up in your lesson
3. Compare to your goals and predictions
4. Reflect on your overall experience

Revise

1. Revise your process (observations, data gathering)
2. Revise your direction (new goals? new lesson? new indicator?)
3. Identify your gaps (skills, knowledge, outside help)

PDAR In-Depth

Use the reflective questions below to guide you. You don't have to answer all of them—they are there to give you ideas and help you reflect.

(Take notes in the book or download one of the worksheets above.)

Plan

1. Identify lessons/unit you would like to apply Language Use to
 1. What are your upcoming lessons?
 2. If you need inspiration, jump to our “Lesson Ideas” section below.
2. Review Language Use with your lesson(s) in mind. Ask yourself:
 1. What do I know about my students' everyday language?
 2. How can I incorporate it into my instruction?
 3. How can I incorporate it into the planned activity?
 4. What are some ways I can interact with my students using their everyday language?
 5. What terms might I need to know to enforce rules/discipline in their everyday language?
 6. How do I react when my students use their everyday language in class?
 7. How can I encourage my students' use of their everyday language in class?
 8. What environmental factors might support everyday language use?
3. Identify your “look fors”— what you expect and hope to see.
 1. How would you like to change?
 2. What do you want students to experience?
 3. What do you expect to happen?
 4. How do you think the students will react?
 5. How do you think you will react?
4. Plan your observations
 1. Would you like a video or observation notes?
 2. Do you need any tools?
 3. When will you observe yourself/be observed?
 4. Will you do this study solo or with colleagues?

Do

1. Work from the plan
 1. Do you need to improve?
 2. What kind of notes should observers take?
 3. How long will your observations be? (15-20 minutes)
 4. How many observations before analyzing? (We recommend 3)

Analyze

1. Record/review what happened
 1. If using video, take detailed notes: what did students say and do? What did you say and do?
 2. If using colleague feedback, what did they observe students/you say and do?
2. Analyze each indicator (click here to see the [Language Use CASI rubric](#))
 1. Instructional Discourse
 1. How did I incorporate everyday language into my lesson and feedback?
 2. Social Conversation
 1. How did I use everyday language to express affection and enforce rules?
 3. Students' Use
 1. Did my students initiate and reciprocate everyday language use?
 4. Language Inclusion
 1. What did I do to encourage and incorporate everyday language use?
3. Compare to your goals and speculations
 1. Did you meet the goals you set?
 2. Can you justify your interpretation with evidence?
 3. Were your predictions correct?
 4. Can you justify with evidence?
4. Reflect on your experience
 1. What changes did you notice in yourself or your students?
 2. Which indicators came naturally? Which were challenging?
 3. What happened that you were not expecting?

Revise

1. Revise your process
 1. Do you need to change your observation method? Did your video work?
 2. Were you able to gather good insights from the process?
2. Revise your direction
 1. Would you like to continue or stop CASI use for this dimension? Is it time to move to a new dimension?
 2. Would you like to continue with the same goals or revise them?
 3. What can you revise in your lesson plan to better incorporate LU?
3. Examine your gaps
 1. What skill or knowledge gaps keep you from applying LU in your classroom (e.g., do you know what language or language variety your students speak outside of school? Do you know any words or phrases in that language/language variety?)
 2. Who could you work or discuss with to improve?

Conclusion

If language is the vehicle for learning, everyday language use is grease for those wheels. Integrating students' home and everyday languages into the classroom enhances social relations, facilitates instruction, and reinforces positive cultural identities for those students. It is linked to better outcomes for minoritized students. And, fortunately, it doesn't require huge changes to start practicing language use this week.

Our goal with this chapter was to help you appreciate the value of Language Use, feel confident explaining Language Use to peers, parents, and administrators, and feel ready to begin practicing Language Use in your classroom or school.

But as teacher learners, the process doesn't end for you with abstract knowledge gained from the chapter. Practicing Language Use in the classroom will uncover numerous opportunities and challenges we didn't cover here. When that happens, and we hope it does, share your experiences and questions with other educators, and with us (if you feel so inclined). Talk to students about what's working; talk to families about what language means to them.

Above all, keep asking yourself: "How can I welcome everyday language into my classroom this week?"

Resources for Teaching and Learning Language Use

Materials for the Classroom

- Bilingual, dual lingual, and multicultural book lists:
- American Library Association's [Bilingual Books for Children List](#) (organized by 13 languages!)
- Edutopia's [22 diverse book choices that represent students' lives](#)
- Scholastic's [11 Bilingual Books for Kids](#)
- Scholastic's [Multicultural Books for Kids 6-10](#)
- EdWeek blog: [understanding the benefits of students home language](#) (scroll to the bottom for lesson ideas about integrating home language)

Video Examples

- [Ms. Noonan practices language use while teaching 5th graders how to cut a cube](#). Note her language use at 4:47 and 7:35 related to perseverance and ganas.
- From the LA School District: [A 5th grade teacher plays a home language translation game](#) (including African American Vernacular English) to teach grammar and code-switching
- YouTube video of an AAVE [lesson](#) between a White American and an African American
- Lessons from Lucey Laney Elementary in Minneapolis: [the importance of AAVE in the classroom](#)

Go Deeper with Language Use

- Watch: Jim Cummins on [language and identity](#)
- Read: EdWeek blog: [understanding the benefits of students home language](#)
- Read: [Case studies from ToggleTalk](#), a program that helps K/1st grade African Americans learn to code switch between African American Vernacular English and Standard American English
- Read: [Article from State of Opportunity](#) about the value of validating code switching and the Toggle Talk program
- Read: Deja Washington's essay "[English is Not our Language](#)" in RefractMag on the ethics of AAVE code switching
- Read: Scholastic's [Many languages, Many cultures](#). This article focuses on how to better validate home language in the classroom.
- [Listen: a U of Michigan program called the "Rounds Project"](#) helps pre-service teachers get experience doing rounds in multicultural rural, suburban, and urban classrooms, to help move beyond the "lecture, textbook, and no real-life interaction" approach.

Have other materials or resources? Share them with us at CASlbookteam@gmail.com!

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Contact Us

We are constantly improving this resource. Have suggestions, resources, or experiences with the CASI you'd like to share?

Email us at CASIbookteam@gmail.com

Thank you!





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Brenton Jackson is a masters student in BYU's Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology. His work centers on applying open educational resources to equity problems in education, as well as studying distinctions of worth in design practice. Creating this online book about equitable practices for K-6 teachers is the focus of his thesis. A native Virginian and adopted Bostonian, Brenton enjoys astrophotography and writing music in his spare time.



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