

On Translanguaging and Learner Affect: An Action Research Study on ESL Secondary
Classrooms Through the Use of a Multilingual Presentation Project

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Abstract

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Amid controversies surrounding multilingual policies in a classroom, something that has become a key component of education in recent years is student's emotional well-being and how emotions influence learning (Song, Howard, Olazabal-Arias, 2022). This action-research study examines the impact of translanguaging on student engagement and affect in a secondary-level English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom in Quebec. While traditional ESL instruction emphasizes English-only policies, translanguaging encourages students to use their full linguistic repertoire, supporting comprehension and participation. Conducted in a French-medium high school, this study involved multilingual presentations where students used their first languages (L1s) alongside English. Teacher-researcher observations through field notes were analyzed to assess student collaboration, participation, and emotional responses. The findings of this research suggest that the use of translanguaging can foster engagement, reduce presentation anxiety and promote inclusivity. This research contributes to multilingual education by highlighting translanguaging as a strategy to enhance student confidence and learning in diverse, multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: Translanguaging, ESL, affect, multilingual education, student engagement, collaboration, emotions

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Introduction

The ability to communicate across cultures and languages has become more important than ever in today's world. Traditionally, the teaching methods in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms, which cater to students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, have emphasized English-only instruction, with a focus on students' second language (L2) to maximize their exposure and experience with it during instruction. However, this approach has been critiqued for overlooking students' rich linguistic repertoires, including their expertise in and experience with their first languages (L1s), that they can bring into L2 classrooms.

In fact, a growing body of research in the field of bilingual and multilingual education advocates for translanguaging, an approach that encourages the fluid and dynamic use of all linguistic resources of a student. Translanguaging challenges the traditional notion of a strict separation between languages and instead promotes a more holistic and integrated approach to language learning. In the context of ESL education, translanguaging can be particularly valuable, as it recognizes that a student's full linguistic repertoire can be an asset in the learning process. Over the past few years, translanguaging has begun to make its way into language classrooms. More and more research is coming to light that challenges monolingual language policies in different institutions.

As someone who has been an ESL teacher for close to nine years at both primary and secondary levels, I am coming from a place where I was strict about using an English-only policy. I only allowed students to speak English in my class, and there was no flexibility in that approach. In the school that I currently work at, 70% of students are first- or second-generation immigrants from mostly South America, North Africa, and the Middle East. When I first heard

about translanguaging in an ESL classroom, I told myself I would never use it in my classroom because it went against what I was taught in my teacher-training program and what I had incorporated in my teaching philosophy. However, considering the many advantages exist when adopting a translanguaging stance in the classroom, relatively little of that research has been carried out in actual language classrooms. This is why I decided to stray away from the monolingual approach to limiting the use of students' L1s in a classroom and conduct an action-research study on the use of translanguaging in my own classroom through multilingual presentations.

Literature Review

Translanguaging and Its Benefits for L2 Learning

Translanguaging is “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Ramotwala et al., 2022, p. 2). It is an approach that encourages learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire in the process of acquiring a new language. It recognizes the fluidity of language practices among bilingual and multilingual students, allowing them to draw on their L1s to enhance comprehension and communication through multiple linguistic means. Because of the increasing popularity for the use of translanguaging among researchers and educators, the main question that reappears throughout research is if we can view translanguaging as a need-based resource, in the same sense that we would use a dictionary, for instance, to look up the meanings of words, and not necessarily as a strict all-or-nothing policy that is implemented in a classroom by teachers (Choi & Liu, 2024).

The many benefits to the use of translanguaging put into question traditional monolingual ideologies, where “the conventional boundaries separating one language from another fail to

accurately reflect the fluid nature of language” (Carroll & Morales, 2016, p. 251). For instance, Carroll and Morales (2016) focused on a college ESL classroom where translanguageing was used to teach a novel. The study took place in Puerto Rico, which is largely bilingual, yet the use of language mixing has traditionally been frowned upon in higher education. Consequently, English remains the main language of instruction, even though Spanish is the L1 of most students. Students participated in a month-long unit where they were required to read *The Boy Without a Flag* (1992) and discuss the text in any language they felt relevant while participating in literature circles. The novel itself was a great choice because it was culturally relevant and relatable to the students. According to the researchers, the use of this flexible language policy allowed students to participate in the language they felt most comfortable in and “demonstrated their comprehension of the reading by not limiting their answers as a result of their language proficiency” (Carroll & Morales, 2016, p. 258).

Researchers have also examined the efforts of schools to implement translanguageing pedagogy and multilingual approaches. In the study by Menken and Sánchez (2019), the participating teachers had originally held strictly monolingual practices but were open to adopting a *translanguageing stance*, as the authors put it. The schoolboard administration was willing to accommodate by changing school language policies and creating and implement new bilingual education programs. There were 8 schools involved: one elementary from kindergarten to grade 6, 5 middle schools from grades 6 to 8 and 2 high schools from grades 9 and 12. The teachers had to attend professional development sessions and received support throughout the process. Some of the ways in which the teachers incorporated students’ home languages into their teaching lessons included allowing multiple languages to be used during class discussions and conducting multilingual literacy practices. Some teachers created a multilingual landscape in

their classrooms by visually displaying students' home languages by word walls, cognate walls, and false cognate walls in English and students' L1. When teachers implemented multilingual practices, students first found them a little challenging because they had been accustomed to monolingual classrooms, but it did not take long for students to realize that their home languages were appreciated, and that the classroom was a safe space for them to share all of their linguistic repertoire. Students became very engaged in lessons, which created more positive relationships between the emergent bilinguals and English monolingual students.

In Agustin and Wahyudi's (2024) recent study, the aim was to examine university students' approaches and views on translanguaging during classroom presentations. The participants were three English literature majors at a university in Indonesia. All three were of different ethnicities and came from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. When interviewed after the presentations, the use of translanguaging had a positive impact because the audience understood what they were saying, because translanguaging helped those who were at a lower language skill level, and because translanguaging was helpful in avoiding or resolving pronunciation problems. For many students, mastering pronunciation is an essential part of feeling competent in a new language and integrating into L2-speaking environments.

The focus of Prada's (2019) research was on heritage speakers of Spanish in the United States and their often negative self-perceptions as Spanish speakers and community members. The setting was in a lower-level university Spanish course for heritage speakers. Although most students were second-generation Spanish speakers, the most dominant language that they used in their social or familial settings was English or Spanglish. Interviews with students revealed that they were used to being in a classroom where non-target linguistic forms, such as those that involved a mixture of English and Spanish, were not welcome by their teachers. For example, in

English class, it was an English-only environment; and in a Spanish class, it was a Spanish-only environment. Using Spanglish was frowned upon even if the students used it to communicate outside of the classroom. In fact, students were consistently told by either family members or teachers that mixing language is only for more uneducated people. Prada's work not only reveals not only several origins of students' negative perceptions about themselves as language speakers but also highlights the importance of creating a language classroom that is an open space where "all linguistic experiences and life trajectories matter" (p. 318).

Translanguaging and Learner Affect

Emotions are an important part of teaching and learning, with both teachers and students experiencing them regularly, but they have not been studied much in translanguaging research. In a rare study, Dryden et al. (2021) examined migrant EFL learners' experiences in Western Australia from 2019 to 2021. Learning a new language can be intimidating and it can cause a lot of anxiety, especially for newcomers. In terms of language, anxiety refers to "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning" (Dryden, 2021, p. 2). Anxiety can be both physical and psychological, in the sense that individuals can demonstrate both physical symptoms such as increased heart rate and perspiration and affective responses such as feeling embarrassed or self-conscious when speaking their L2. The aim of this study was to acknowledge the presence of anxiety among L2 speakers, especially newcomers, and to understand if their anxiety can be minimized through a translanguaging environment. The researchers found that creating safe translanguaging spaces could have therapeutic benefits for L2 speakers which help them overcome negative experiences and gain confidence when speaking their L2. The researchers also showed that safe translanguaging spaces allowed L2 speakers to freely express their

emotions and anxieties, fear, distress, and embarrassment that they were experiencing. When the speakers were allowed to use their whole linguistic repertoire to express themselves, they also often felt a strong sense of belonging and acceptance.

Zhang's (2024) study focused on the use of a translanguaging space with students in a university in China, all majoring in English language and literature. A translanguaging space was defined as a "space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging" (Zhang, 2024, p. 303). The researcher was the teacher participant and was already aware of translanguaging pedagogy, so she encouraged her students to use their home languages during their English class. Furthermore, the students were asked to share their emotions about learning English and were provided with vocabulary to describe various emotions. In the subsequent weeks, the students noted down their emotions and were encouraged to draw emotional curves and produce narrative reports of how they felt. The findings of Zhang's study demonstrate how the use of translanguaging practices can reveal students' emotional wellbeing in a language course. The fact that the students were asked on a weekly basis to complete their emotional curves for homework and then share them in a safe translanguaging space helped those students transform many of the negative emotions that they experienced during the first weeks, including embarrassment, anxiety, and insecurity, to feeling more comfortable in subsequent weeks.

Although some teachers can make efforts to fully support their students, more work needs to be done to make all students comfortable in their classrooms. When there is a lack of a common language between teachers and students, some behaviours can go unnoticed or just brushed off as bad behaviour. In Back et al.'s (2020) case study, several L2-speaking students experienced difficulty following the course content because they were unable to fully understand

their teacher. One of the students, Jessica, did not act out and just sat very quietly. Because she excelled in other subjects such as math, the teacher was unaware that Jessica's quietness was a sign of trouble. On the other hand, the other student, Shen, had behaviour issues like getting antsy and getting up out of his seat and walking around the class without permission. The teacher attributed this to his lack of understanding of classroom rules. However, when students were allowed to use their home language in instructional activities, both went from feeling isolated in their classrooms to being active participants, and they felt heard by their teacher. At the same time, the students' monolingual peers appreciated their classmates more and learned something from them. So, it was a win-win for everyone in the class and a demonstration of how translanguaging benefits not just student learning but their emotional wellbeing as well.

The Present Study

Although translanguaging and its benefits have been discussed in previous literature, there is still a lack of a teacher-centric perspective of translanguaging, especially at the secondary level, with a focus on students' affect. How is translanguaging related to student participation in an activity? How do students react to a translanguaging activity that encourages them to use their L1s? The aim of this classroom-based action research study was therefore to provide a teacher perspective on the benefits of translanguaging, focusing in particular on how students respond to the use of translanguaging as part of a classroom activity. For this project, I was the teacher-participant. My role was to act as a facilitator while students work through a multilingual presentation project which encourages them to use multiple languages in addition to English (the target language of instruction). Simultaneously, my role as a researcher was to take notes after each teaching day on what exactly happened, what worked, and what could be improved. This project has provided valuable insights into the use of translanguaging as a strategy for fostering a

dynamic and supportive learning environment. The findings might also contribute to a deeper understanding of language acquisition and pedagogy in diverse classrooms, paving the way for more inclusive educational practices. The following research question guided my study: What are students' affective reactions—as seen from the perspective of the teacher-researcher—about the use of a translanguaging activity in an ESL classroom?

Students were tasked to work in groups of 2-4 for this project. If possible, they were grouped for the most part with having the same L1. This project took six classes to come to fruition which equals about three weeks of class time. The class that followed after the presentations were over, students were asked to complete a post-project reflection.

Method

Context

The project took place during regular ESL classes in a French-medium high school in Laval, Québec. At this high school, there are nearly 1,700 students who come from mostly low-income families. Of these students, approximately 70% are children of immigrants, with nearly 40% being children of first-generation newcomers who have resided in Canada for less than three years. The students attending the ESL class are approximately 51 teenagers at the secondary 2 level (13–14 years old). All their other courses are given in French, so attending English classes is their only opportunity to be using English in an academic context in school. They have English class four times in a 10-day cycle. This usually amounts to having class twice per week. The students' L1s are varied and include French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Creole, Mandarin, Tamil, Urdu, and Russian. These students have varying experiences with English outside of the classroom; some are very bilingual, for others, this is not the case. ESL classes in

Québec are not always homogenous, so differences in English proficiency are possible and expected.

Teaching Materials

The students participated in multilingual presentations. The benefits of multilingual presentations are that the students will feel more confident expressing themselves while practicing their language skills, which will also foster a deeper understanding on their own personal and cultural stories. The use of multilingual presentations expected to make students appreciate one another and their backgrounds. For the presentations, the students had the choice of five different topics:

1. Cultural festivals: share a fun festival from your country, like holidays or celebrations and what people do during them.
2. Food from around the world: present a popular dish from your home country and describe what it tastes like and why it's special.
3. Games and sports: talk about a traditional game or sport from your country, explain the rules and why it's fun.
4. Famous people: share a short story about a famous person from your culture and what they did that is important.
5. Religious traditions: explain a religious practice from your culture and what it means to people.

The students were allowed and in fact encouraged to use their L1s alongside English in creating and presenting their work. Allowing the students to use their full linguistic repertoire alleviated pressure by making the classroom flexible enough that they feel liberated to communicate in their home language. The presentations encouraged the students to share and

reflect on their cultural backgrounds. They were working in teams which was less stressful for them in terms of presentation anxiety and were able to build on each other's knowledge.

This project took six classes (Appendix 1), which is a typical timeline when it comes to ESL units (see Figure 1 for a schematic illustration of study design and procedure). During Class 1, I introduced the multilingual presentation project to the students (Appendix 2). I also familiarized the students with the evaluation criteria (Appendix 3), which followed the Québec Education Program's evaluation rubrics and assessment guidelines. The students were familiar with these rubrics because they have been used previously with the students in assessing their performance in other activities. The final part of the introductory class consisted of showing the students an example of a multilingual presentation (Appendix 4). Modeling is important in an ESL class. A clear example demonstrated to the students how to structure their presentation and use the appropriate language. An example also helped students build their confidence and ensure that they know what is expected, making it easier for them to express their ideas effectively.

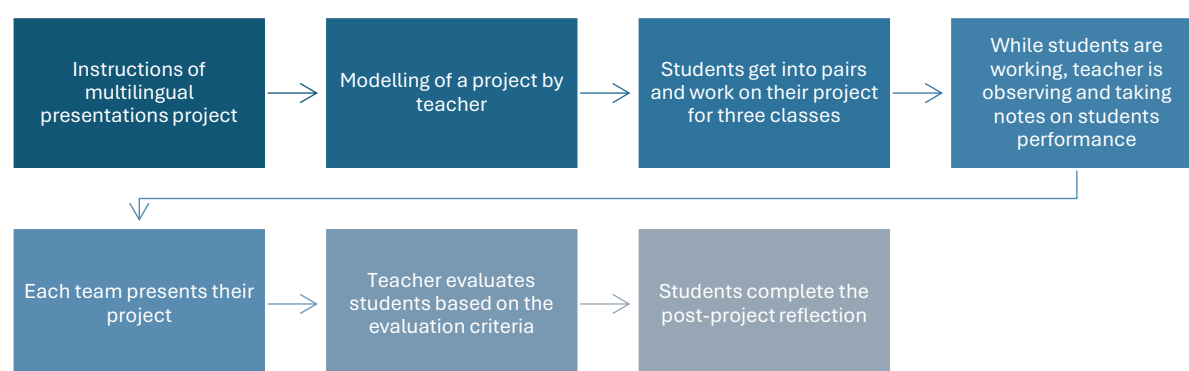


Figure 1. Study design and procedure.

During Class 2 and 3, the students were working collaboratively on their projects, engaging in collaborative dialogue with each other. Collaborative dialogue is crucial in a translanguaging process because it offers speakers the chance to deepen their use of their linguistic repertoire and help them affirm their multilingual identity (Choi & Liu, 2021). The students had access to Chromebooks to be able to conduct internet searches as they research and plan their presentations. The students presented their presentations during Class 5. Finally, during Class 6, the students were given a simple post-project reflection worksheet (Appendix 5). The worksheet would elicit the students' perceptions about conducting the project and being able to use their L1s.

Research Process

This is a participatory action research project. My situation made it ideal for me to conduct action research because I work in the ESL field as a full-time ESL teacher at the high school level. The project took place in my ESL classroom and was implemented with my students because the activities were designed for my ESL students. Because this project focused on the teacher-researcher's perspective on the use of translanguaging by students, all data for the project consisted of only my own observations, in the form of field notes written electronically with the use of an iPad. An observation grid that I created was used (Appendix 6). I focused on four different categories: student's collaboration and interaction, students' affect and emotions, teacher's role in facilitation during group work, development of language and student motivation and engagement. There were guiding questions that facilitated my reflections and help guide my notetaking. The post-project reflection worksheet that was given to students after the multilingual presentations were over helped me conclude my study. It gave me a way to see the project through the students' perspectives.

Results and Discussion

As a teacher-researcher, I recorded anecdotal observations based on my direct experiences in the classroom. These notes capture spontaneous interactions, student behaviors, and instructional moments that I found significant. Specifically, my observations focused on students participating in a multilingual presentation project that encouraged the use of translanguaging. Throughout this project, students strategically navigated between English, French, and other home languages to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and support their peers. These observations, although subjective, provide rich qualitative insights into the dynamics of translanguaging in an ESL classroom in real-time. These insights serve as valuable data, offering an authentic, teacher-based perspective on classroom practices. My notes are separated by class, numbered 1 to 6.

Class 1: Introduction & Brainstorming

It took me 45 minutes to introduce students to the idea of a multilingual presentation project as well as the concept of translanguaging. Students had never been exposed to this type of project. If they are in English class, they are in a zero-tolerance policy of using other languages. Since it is a French school, all their other courses are in French. So, the same monolingual policy applies.

When I gave my explanations to my first group, it was during the first period of the day, so they were full of energy. They were motivated and excited, but they still had questions on how

to use their home languages in their presentations. For my second group, who I had during the last period of the day, I was a bit more worried. When I was giving the explanations, the students seemed very out of it yet as soon as I asked them to get into teams, they knew exactly what to do. It was extremely surprising to see. I was very relieved. The students were referring to my model presentation a lot so that strategy was essential.

Students at this point only had about 25 minutes to begin brainstorming so for both groups I walked around and make sure they understood what they were tasked to do. There is no tension or anxiety that was sensed, and all the teams were actively contributing, even my weak students who are not so proficient in English. I was curious to see how students would form their teams. For the groups that do not have the same L1, they were starting to make links between their home language and English. Some are starting to see words that have the same definition in both languages.

Students were asked to come see me when they chose their teams, topic and languages. Some students were very precise. For example, if they were using Spanish, they specified whether it was Spanish from Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica or Colombia. If it was Arabic, they specified which variation. For example, Moroccan Darija or Kabil. I was surprised at how specific they were even though they were not asked by me to specify.

In one of the groups, there were four Arabic students. Three are from Algeria and one is Tunisian. There seemed to be a lapse of understanding in these two variations of Arabic and the Tunisian student goes as far as to say that his teammates do not speak Arabic since he does not understand them. This was the final observation note that I took for this class, and I was really excited for next class to see if any tensions would arise between this team.

Class 2: Research

At the beginning of class, I took time to review with students on the expectations of today's class. Students all had their planning document with them to continue brainstorming, taking notes and researching. At this point, all teams had finalized their topic, and some had asked me for permission to use more than one topic. I mentioned to students that they should watch out if they notice any similarities between their languages in terms of pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary. I wanted them to see that even if the languages seemed so different, there may still be commonalities.

In any classroom, it is imperative for teachers to be circulating to make sure students stay on track. With so many different teenage personalities, there is a big element of classroom management when it comes to conducting a project. In my case, constantly circulating had two benefits: to record my anecdotal observations as well as maintaining a positive classroom environment.

In one of the teams, it was two of my weakest students who have made it a point this year to express how much they hate English. It even went as far as them skipping many classes during the first and second term. A meeting was set up with the parents and administration and the students admitted that they had extremely bad experiences in their English classes in previous years. For this project, I assumed that they would choose French, but they came to see me to ask if they can choose Italian and Polish. They told me that they had roots in those languages because of their grandparents. They wanted to know if they could still use them in their presentation even if they were not fluent and I gave them the go ahead.

In another team, there were three native Spanish speakers – one from Columbia, the other from Cuba and the last from Mexico. They were working quite well together and did not seem to

have any lapse of understanding when communicating. They were seamlessly transitioning from Spanish to English. While I was doing my rounds, they did mention that there are differences in the pronunciation between the variations of Spanish that they all speak, and they will be addressing these differences during their presentation. In other groups where Spanish from Mexico was also being used, students were very adamant about which variation of Spanish. One student mentioned that the variations are extremely different.

In one team, students were very multicultural – two students spoke Arabic from Lebanon, one was an Urdu speaker from Pakistan and the last one was a Turkish speaker from Turkey. For some reason, the student who spoke Urdu kept on saying that he does not really speak it. I know for a fact that his parents do not speak English or French and Urdu is the only language spoken at home. I think it is for social reasons that he is making this statement. During Class 1, the team had told me they would integrate Arabic and Turkish into their presentation yet now, they are settling for their common language, French. They admitted to me that there was too much confusion and tension amongst themselves. It was a bit disappointing, but I did not want to force them to do anything that was causing tension. In another team, they were integrating Urdu and Arabic into their presentation. This team mentioned that there is very large number of words that are similar both in vocabulary and pronunciation. They were very happy about noticing this.

In the last team that I was observing, there was one Quebecois student, one Spanish from Mexico and one Russian. I asked them if they found any similarities. I was expecting to hear the Spanish and French similarities but on the contrary. The Spanish students found similarities with the Russian student because in both languages they roll their *r*:

Class 3: Research

At this point, students knew their topics and were continuing their research. I took time at the beginning to tell students that in a week from today, they will have their presentations. It shocked them a little but I did assure them by reminding them that they still have two full classes to finish their presentation. They also have a day off school the day before their presentations. I encouraged them to use that day if needed to finalize their project.

During this class, I had to intervene with one team because I noticed that although they were both working, they were not collaborating or speaking to each other. They are two extremely shy students. When I approached them, they told me that one of them is taking care of the Creole part of the presentation and the other, the French part. They will only meet back during Class 4 to work together. I told them that they should also include similarities between both their languages if they see any during Class 4.

Another team is working in the same way. It's important to note that the students in this team are extremely proficient in English. What they decided to do with the project was to write the information in English only first. Then, when they were done with the information, they would start integrating their home languages of Twi and Moroccan Arabic. I wanted to see how they would do this next class and I did mention to them that I wanted to them to see if they saw any similarities between the languages.

I mentioned one team in Class 2 that was very multicultural that decided to only use French in their presentation because of the fact that incorporating different languages was causing confusing and tension for them has finally decided to include their native languages.

I found it interesting how students can seamlessly transition between all these languages. They were able to negotiate for meaning, and still produced all their notes on their planning sheet in English.

In terms of student motivation and engagement, the main challenge that students seemed to be facing was how to incorporate a second or third language into their presentation. I think this has a lot to do with the nature of this project and that it was new to them.

There was some tension in one team during this class. This was the team that I mentioned in Class 1 where one student claims that his teammates do not speak Arabic because he does not understand their variation of it, which is Kabyle. That student in question is not providing much help to his team and they are getting frustrated with him. When I checked back with this team at the end of class, the Kabyle speakers did take the time to explain to me that Kabyle is not Arabic or an Arabic variety. It is its own language because the Kabyle people are the indigenous to Algeria and they consider themselves their own entity. My unfamiliarity with these languages and their cultural background may have impacted my ability to manage the group's tension which affected their motivation and engagement. I was not able to fully mediate the linguistic misunderstandings that they were going through.

For the development of language, one team had included grammar rules in Spanish during their presentation, especially for determiners. They mentioned that the determiners in Spanish are similar to determiners in French as opposed to in English where we mostly use the articles *a*, *an*, *the*. There were also a lot of pronunciation similarities. The team in question gave me the following example: if we take the word *lawyer*, in French it would be *avocat (masculine)* or *avocate (feminine)* and in Spanish it would be *abogado (masculine)* or *abogada (feminine)*.

The last team that I observed is the team that is including Tachelhit, Tamil, Kingarwanda and Creole. The students mentioned that Tachelhit and Creole are French-inspired languages which is why they were noticing a lot of similarities in pronunciation and vocabulary.

The student who spoke Tachelhit, which is a Berber variety, claimed that most people in Morocco do not consider themselves Arab because they were colonized. He also told me that Tachelhit is a spoken language, not a written language. All of his family have spoken it their whole lives yet do not write it – they use the Latin script instead. The only time it is written somewhere is for practical purposes like for road signs in some parts of Morocco.

This student also claimed that the common Arab language that is used anywhere in northern Africa is not a real Arabic language; it is a language that is mostly English, French and Spanish inspired. This was very eye-opening and revolutionary for me. I was shocked to see how a 14-year-old knew the difference between spoken versus written languages. Also, it seemed there was a noticeable pattern throughout teams that were using a variation of Arabic. There were lots of differences of opinion over the status of these different varieties of Arabic and what ‘real Arabic’ is. Some studies show that age, gender and how much people move away from the city are factors that can explain why people speak in different ways. According to Abd-El-Jawad (1987), some people may keep using older ways of speaking and stick to their local speech to show pride in where they come from and also stand out. On the other hand, “speakers may abandon their vernacular forms in favor of other dominant forms which are prestigious in these communities” (Abd-El-Jawad, 1987, p. 365). So, some may change the way they speak and use a more respected form of their language in order to fit in with different social groups, instead of their own.

The teams that had the most fruitful conversations between each other were the ones that did not share the same L1. There was a lot new vocabulary being acquired and students had a more positive outlook on the project. The most tension that I observed were the teams that have the same L1 like Arabic for example because of the many varieties of Arabic. The arguments are

more competitive-like because one student thought their Arabic is the ‘right’ variation of Arabic. According to Theodoropoulou (2017), Arabic is a language with a lot of variety in how people speak it and it all depends on where they are from. Some varieties are seen are more respected than others and this often has to do with the social status of the people who speak them. This is why Arabic is an area of interest by sociolinguists.

Class 4: Finalize & Practice

This was the last class before the presentations and I noticed a lot of interesting things as students worked on their projects. It was a good time to check in, help where needed and see how students were feeling and collaborating.

We started by going over the evaluation rubric again (appendix 3). I wanted to make sure students remembered how they would be marked and what was expected of them. This helped them stay focused and make any last changes before the final presentation.

One group told me that they wanted to check with their parents before handing in their project. They wanted to make sure the words and ideas they were using in their home language was correct. I thought this was great because it showed that they care about giving accurate information and it was nice to see that they include their families as part of their learning.

Another group was a bit stressed because two of their teammates had missed two out of four classes. Still, the students who were there had prepared just in case and were ready to go on without them if needed. It shows how responsible and flexible they are.

I had yet to observe any hesitation or a lapse of understanding when students spoke or switched languages. It’s so interesting how multilingual brains work and how students use all their languages to help them think, talk and create.

One team was stuck when it came to mixing their languages. I showed them my example again so they could get some inspiration. At the end of class, when I returned back into this team, they had figured it out and also included questions for the audience at the end of their presentation. They also put a “thank you” slide in all the languages they were using.

There was a small tech issue because a team that was using Arabic wants to include the Arabic alphabet. They were having a hard time because on the Chromebooks, they couldn’t change the keyboard. They asked me for permission to use their cellphones because they had access to the keyboard on it.

One team was using German because although they were not fluent in the language, they had roots in Germany. The student in question had mentioned lots of similarities between vocabulary and pronunciation of words. They gave the example of the word *beer* which is *bier* in German.

At this point, I was really excited to see how all of this hard work would come together in the next class. Students had put in the work and had filled their presentations with creativity, culture and teamwork. The teams would finally have the chance to share what they had created.

Class 5: Presentations

All teams were able to present in Class 5. While the majority were well-prepared, a small number of teams seemed less ready. One student spoke about the Berber trinity which highlights the importance of language, land and people. Another student proudly presented in Tamil, sharing aspects of his Sri Lankan culture. He only speaks Tamil at home with his family, so it was meaningful for him to bring that into his presentation.

A particularly shy student, who isn’t quite proficient in English, had Creole vocabulary on his slides but did not share it out loud. Interestingly, in his post-project reflection, he wrote

that learning languages is not important. The fact that he is extremely shy could have been the reason why he did not want to share the vocabulary out loud. By default, he probably wrote that learning languages isn't important because this is something that makes him uncomfortable.

One group had a unique format: one student presented in English, followed by translations in other languages by the rest of the team. Their slides included both the English and translated versions, which enhanced clarity for the rest of us watching the presentation. Another team stood out for their exceptional preparation. Made up of three native Spanish speakers from Colombia, Mexico and Cuba, they proudly showcased their cultures by covering food, famous actors, and festivals, while also highlighting the distinctions between their countries.

In one group, students integrated Spanish and French seamlessly into their English presentation. Words from each language were included into their paragraphs naturally. The Quebecois students amusingly referred to poutine as the “ingredient cliché” of Quebec. The next team mentioned they would use French and Spanish at the beginning but ended up only presenting only in English. These students struggled with communicating in English and their presentation seemed copied and pasted from the internet, which made pronunciation even more difficult. I wondered why they just didn't use simple language to present.

A Quebecois student, who is very proficient in English, chose to present alone and delivered an outstanding presentation. She had a strong interest in Greek culture and musicals. Her multilingual presentation was inspired by *Epic*, a musical based on the *Odyssey*. She used Greek throughout, provided English translations, and mentioned spending a lot of time practicing pronunciation. She also noted similarities between Greek and English pronunciation.

Four teams provided a slide on the similarities and differences between the languages they were using. While this wasn't a requirement, seeing those slides made me realize it should

have been. It would have encouraged deeper thinking and accountability for each team. One team, for example, used the pronunciation similarity between *ayisyen* in Creole and *haïtien* in French. In another team, where Urdu and Arabic were used, they mentioned how there is a lot of similarities in both script and meaning of certain words.

One of the most surprising and inspiring presentations came from a team made up of a native Spanish speaker and a native Arabic speaker. Each student practiced and spoke to other's language during the presentation. Their collaborative effort and willingness to step outside their comfort zones was impressive.

Class 6: Post-project reflection

Finally, the time had come to give students their post-project reflection. They worked hard for five classes and I wanted them to tell me how they felt about the project. Most importantly, how they felt about sharing their home languages, their culture and if learning languages is important to them.

Students had 20 minutes to fill out the reflection, individually. Because there was about 45 minutes left to the class, I didn't necessarily want to start a new chapter in their activity book, so I rewarded them with an episode from the series called *Street Food* on Netflix. The episode was based on the street food scene in New York where producers interviewed different street food vendors and it was interesting to see how it wasn't simply a food truck or a job for these people. It was a way for them to bring their own culture to New York and to their clients. Students responded very well to the episode.

While reviewing the post-project reflections, students were quite honest in their responses. Some students spoke about how although they were quite nervous to present in front

of a class, they were still happy to be sharing their culture with others. Others wrote that they felt no sense of nervousness during this presentation although usually it would be something that is nerve-wracking for them. They also mentioned how they appreciated hearing other languages and learning about their classmates' cultures.

In terms of learning languages, most students claimed that learning languages is something important to them in terms of travelling and communicating. One student wrote that he is grateful to know his home language because if he didn't, he wouldn't be able to communicate with his extended family when he visits them abroad. Another student wrote how although he used some of his home language in his presentation, it saddened him that he wasn't fluent in that language and only knew certain words. He wrote that his parents did not take the time to teach it to him and he's not happy about that because he sensed how proud some of his classmates were when they were presenting. One student claimed to want to be a polyglot eventually. He already speaks three and he is actively learning three more: Korean, Japanese and Mandarin.

Lastly, a lot of students mentioned the aspect of work in their responses. They wrote about how knowing more than one language will help them in their future endeavours. One student wants to become a doctor so they wrote that they will be able to communicate with their patients without difficulty. Another wrote about how learning languages stimulates your brain function and can even your brain stronger which will result in more intelligence.

Reflecting on the use of presentations in my classroom this year, I'd say it was a bit of a challenge at first. A big part of the challenge that I previously had was students not wanting to present in front of the class because of anxiety issues which is very common in this generation. The multilingual presentation project, our third of the year, showed a noticeable shift. Yes,

students were more motivated and engaged but I also did not have any students come to see me the day of the presentation telling me they were too scared to present, which is something that I had to deal with previously. This time, none of the teams came to see me. The fact that students were sharing their own cultures and home languages instilled a sense of comfortability in my students. They were also quite enthusiastic to show their peers an aspect of their identity. If a project of this nature would be done again with the same group, I think it would go even better. Students would know that it is *okay* to use all of their language repertoire and they are allowed to communicate and express themselves freely in order to complete any given task.

Conclusion

This action research project aimed to explore the impact of translanguaging on multilingual students in a high school ESL classroom in Quebec. By having students conduct a multilingual presentation project and guiding them in every step of the preparation of the project, I was able to observe how students can use their full linguistic repertoire to collaborate and express themselves in meaningful ways.

My findings suggest that students demonstrated pride in their languages, curiosity about each other's backgrounds, and a willingness to take risks. In some cases, challenges arose, especially when tensions between language varieties emerged. However, these moments of conflict also opened space for learning, negotiation, and deeper cultural reflection.

Although data collection was anecdotal and based on my perspective, the rich classroom observations and student interactions offer valuable insights into multilingual learners. The project also served as a reminder that when students are allowed to bring their full linguistic selves into the classroom, they show up more confidently and authentically.

Translanguaging allowed students to move beyond passive participating in language learning and become active contributors in a shared space. This project has confirmed the powerful role that inclusive, flexible language practices can play in promoting student engagement.

Afterword

Writing this thesis has been both a professional and personal journey. What began as a pedagogical exploration of translanguaging became a deep transformation in how I understand language, identity, and learning, especially in the lives of multilingual students.

At the start of my graduate studies, I didn't fully believe in translanguaging as a classroom practice. I was trained and accustomed to using monolingual approaches in my undergraduate degree, and I thought that keeping English at the center was the best way to help my students succeed. Looking back, I now realize that I was unintentionally limiting their voices, their confidence and the rich resources they bring with them.

Through this multilingual presentation project, I witnessed firsthand how powerful it is when students are allowed and encouraged to use all their languages in their learning. This project wasn't just a typical school assignment. It became a celebration of identity, collaboration and cultural pride. Students did not just complete a task. They showed who they are. They supported one another, made choices and showed me what real engagement looks like when learners are seen and heard entirely.

As a teacher, this experience reminded me that learning is not always linear. There were moments of challenge but also of happiness and self-confidence for both the students and me. I have learned to see language not as a set of rules to follow but as a tool for expression and connection.

This transformation did not stop in my classroom. I fought to bring these ideas into a more permanent space at my school. I advocated for the creation of an English concentration program that would reflect the realities of our multilingual learners. I am proud to say that, starting next year, the program will include two courses built around translanguaging practices. This shift in curriculum honors students' whole linguistic and cultural identities.

This thesis marks just one step in my teaching journey. I hope it encourages other second language teachers to reflect, question and grow, just as I have. Translanguaging is more than a strategy. It's a way of teaching, of listening and of believing in everything our students already bring with them into our classrooms.

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Appendices


Appendix 1

Class 1	Teacher takes time to explain the concept of translanguaging and its link to the final term project on multilingual presentations. Teacher also explains the evaluation criteria to students and models an example of a project. Whatever time is left, students can get with their partners and start brainstorming.
Class 2	Students have time to work on their presentations. They will have access to Chromebooks.
Class 3	
Class 4	
Class 5 + 6	Presentations will be during class 5. The sixth class is reserved in case we need more time for presentations. Students will also be completing their post-project reflection.

Appendix 2


[REDACTED] - English class with Miss Anna

MULTILINGUAL PRESENTATION PROJECT




MENU OF THE DAY

01	WELCOME BACK Term 3 Expectations	03	PLANNING DOCUMENT A way to organize yourselves for this project
02	MULTILINGUAL PRESENTATION PROJECT What is translanguaging?	04	FIND YOUR TEAM Figure out who you will be working with and start brainstorming!



WHAT'S LEFT FOR TERM 3?



- 01
Project
- 02
One chapter
in Snapshot
- 03
Final Exam



TERM 3 EXPECTATIONS



- 01
Be
responsible.
- 02
Be respectful.
- 03
Be realistic.



WHAT IS A MULTILINGUAL PRESENTATION?

This project is about sharing your culture and language through a presentation. You will explore a topic and present it using both English and your native languages.

This is what we call the process of translanguageing! But, wait. What is translanguageing in more detail?



HAVE YOU EVER USED WORDS FROM YOUR HOME LANGUAGE WHEN SPEAKING ENGLISH? HOW DID IT HELP YOU?

Translanguageing means using all the languages you know to help you talk and understand better. It allows you to switch between languages in a natural way, rather than keeping them separate.

Why is translanguageing important?

- 1.Helps you communicate more clearly: you can use words from different languages to explain your ideas better.
- 2.Reflects real-life: people often mix languages at home, with friends, or online.
- 3.Builds your confidence: you don't have to speak perfectly in one language. Instead, you can use all your language skills together.
- 4.It encourages learning: using multiple languages can help you understand new words or ideas more easily.

HOW DO YOU ALREADY USE TRANSLANGUAGING?

1. Explaining an idea in English but using words from your home language when needed.
2. Reading information in one language and summarizing it in another.
3. Mixing languages in a conversation like saying: Yesterday, I went to the *dépanneur* and bought some *bonbons*.



OTHER EXAMPLES OF TRANSLANGUAGING

1. Social media: influencers switch between languages in captions, comments, or hashtags.
2. Multilingual music & lyrics: songs that mix languages, like K-pop songs with English phrases or latin music that incorporates Spanish & English
3. News & interviews: journalists or interviewees switching between languages for clarity. For example, a news report in English with an expert providing a quote in French
4. TV Shows & Movies: characters blending languages naturally in dialogue, such as in bilingual communities like... Dora the Explorer!



OTHER EXAMPLES OF TRANSLANGUAGING

1. Family conversations: parents speaking in one language while children respond in another
2. Shopping: stores in multicultural areas with signs in multiple languages or workers in the store switching between languages to help customers.
3. Friendship & socializing: Friends casually mixing languages in conversation, saying things like, "Let's go to the mall después de la escuela"



OTHER EXAMPLES OF TRANSLANGUAGING

1. Class discussions: a student explaining a concept in English but using words from their home languages to make it clearer
2. Note-taking: writing explanations in one language but using key terms from another to better understand
3. Reading & Writing: reading in one language and summarizing it in another
4. Group work & presentations: students discussing ideas in their strongest language before presenting in English, or using different languages to explain a topic for better understanding





THE BENEFITS OF A BILINGUAL BRAIN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMmOLNsZBLY>

LET'S LOOK AT AN EXAMPLE OF A MULTILINGUAL PRESENTATION PROJECT!



The Greek Gods

Something (very) famous in my culture

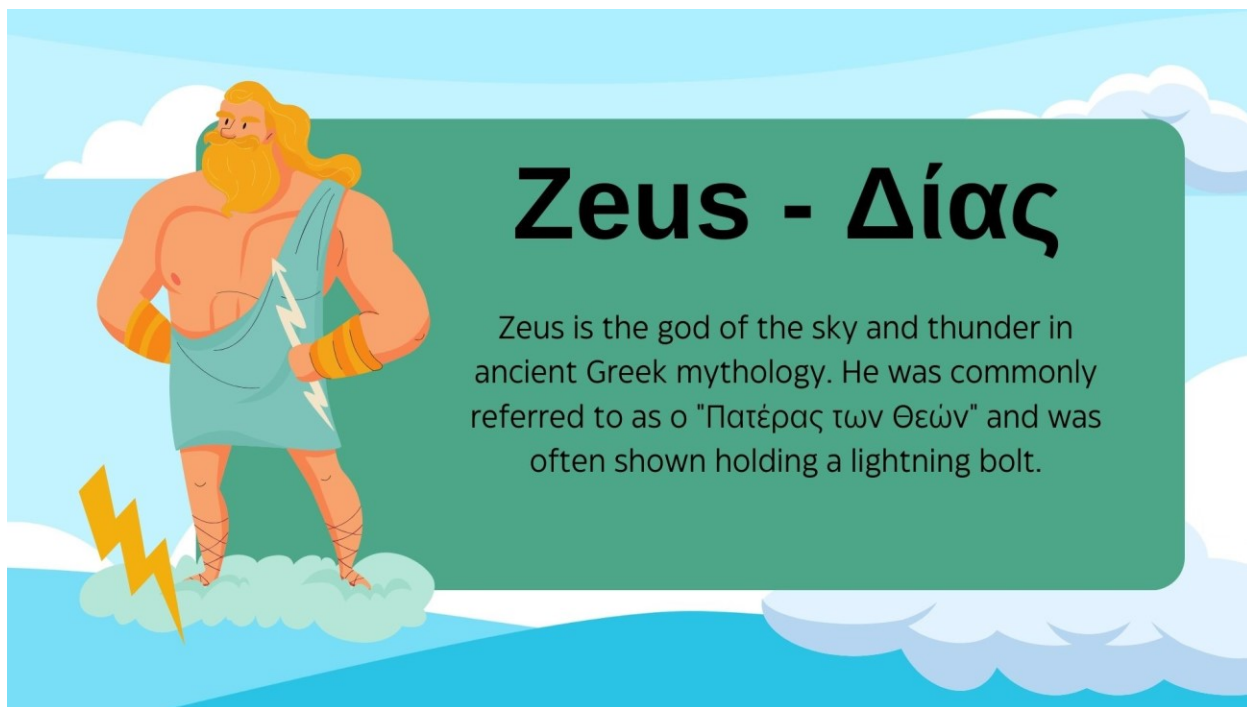
Presentation by Anna Antonopoulos

Greek Gods

The Greek gods are important characters from ancient Greek stories. They were believed to live on a mountain called Mount Olympus. Each god had special powers and represented different parts of life.

There are twelve of them but I will only be talking about five.





Zeus - Δίας

Zeus is the god of the sky and thunder in ancient Greek mythology. He was commonly referred to as ο "Πατέρας των Θεών" and was often shown holding a lightning bolt.



Poseidon (Ποσειδώνας)

Poseidon είναι ένας θεός που σχετίζεται με τη θάλασσα (ocean), τους σεισμούς (earthquakes) και τα άλογα (horses). He is the brother of Zeus and Hades. Poseidon is often shown holding a trident, which was his signature weapon.



Athena (Αθηνά)

Athena is the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, strategic warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill. She is often depicted as μια σοφή και ισχυρή πολεμίστρια (wise and powerful warrior), wearing a helmet and carrying a shield, spear, and an owl, which is a symbol of wisdom.

Apollo (Απόλλων)

Apollo, the son of Zeus, είναι ο θεός της μουσικής (music), της ποίησης (poetry), και της ιατρικής (medicine), as well as the protector of young men and the sun.



Aphrodite (Αφροδίτη)

Aphrodite είναι η ελληνική θεά (goddess) της αγάπης (love) και της ομορφιάς (beauty). She was believed to have been born from the foam of the sea and was often depicted as μια όμορφη γυναίκα (a beautiful woman).

Questions for you!

1. Which Greek God do you relate to?
2. Do you think Greek Gods ever existed? Why or why not?



Thank you!

GUIDELINES

1. You will be working in teams of 2–4 (maximum). You do not necessarily need to be with someone who speaks the same home language as you. You can use both your home languages! You may even find similar ways of speaking!
2. Each team will choose a topic and use at least two languages. The presentation should be interactive and creative.
3. Groups will be evaluated on organization, language use, teamwork, and engagement

GUIDELINES

1. You will have three classes to prepare for this project. If you do not have time to finish, you will need to finish on your own time to be ready for the presentation day.
2. Your presentation will need to be between 5–7 minutes approximately.
3. You will get a planning document today so you can choose your topic from the list provided and start brainstorming with your team. Let's look at the list now!

TOPIC CHOICES

1. Cultural festivals: share a fun festival from your country, like holidays or celebrations and what people do during them
2. Food from around the world: present a popular dish from your home country and describe what it tastes like and why it's special
3. Games and Sports: Talk about a traditional game or sport from your country, explain the rules and why it's fun.
4. Famous People: Share a short story about a famous person from your culture and what they did that is important.
5. Religious Traditions: Explain a religious practice from your culture and what it means to people.
6. If you have other ideas, please come see me to confirm if it's okay!

PROJECT TIMELINE

Class 1: Introduction & start brainstorming



Class 2: Research – Find information about your topic. Start collecting and organizing key points



Class 3: Continue collecting and organizing key points.



PROJECT TIMELINE

Class 4: Finalize & Practice – Plan your presentation



Class 5: Presentations



Class 6: Continue presentations if necessary & complete the project self-reflection



HOW WILL YOU BE EVALUATED?

Competency 1: How you are working with your partner(s). During Class 1 to Class 4, while you are working with your teammates, I will be evaluating how you are participating with your partner(s) and working on your project.



Competency 2&3: your presentation. This will be a group grade. I will evaluate how you reinvested your understanding of the project and your chosen visual support (poster, presentation, etc).

VISUAL SUPPORT

You can use any of these to present your project. You will have access to the Chromebooks for all the classes!

Canva



Slides



Traditional
Poster





PLANNING DOCUMENT

Let's look at the planning document together!

**ANY QUESTIONS OR
CLARIFICATIONS?**



Appendix 3

Name of student: _____

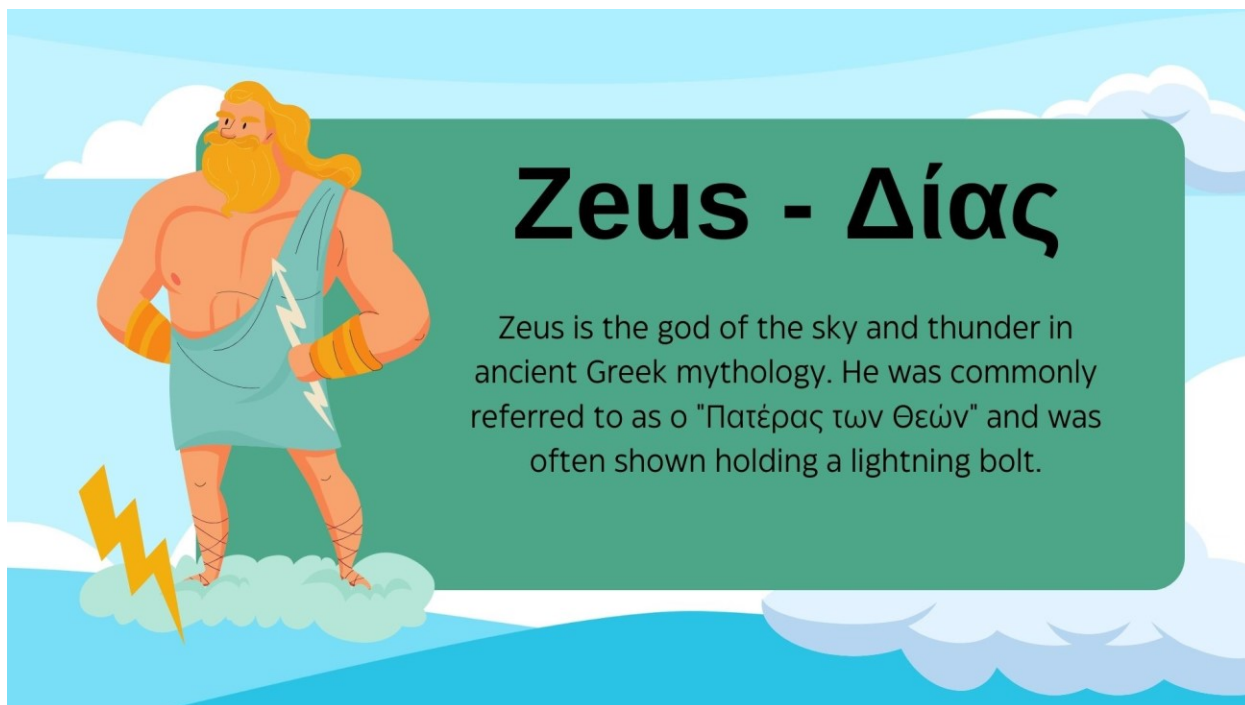
Evaluation Criteria	Exceeds expectations (5)	Meets expectations (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Incomplete (2)
Clarity and Coherence	Ideas are organized and easy to follow	Mostly organized; could be clearer	Some organization, but difficult to follow sometimes	Disorganized; hard to understand overall
Language Use	Uses all languages effectively; smooth transition between them	Good use of languages with some awkward transitions	Limited language usage: transitions can be confusing	Rarely uses other languages; hard to follow.
Fluency	Speaks confidently with few pauses	Some minor pauses or mispronunciations	Slight lack of confidence and noticeable pauses	Nearly complete lack of confidence, many pauses and unclear speech
Visual Aid/Support	Excellent use of visuals that help explain the topic	Good use of visuals that are mostly relevant and helpful	Limited visual support; some relevance but not very helpful	No visuals or visuals that do not support the presentation

Total: /20

Comments:

Appendix 4





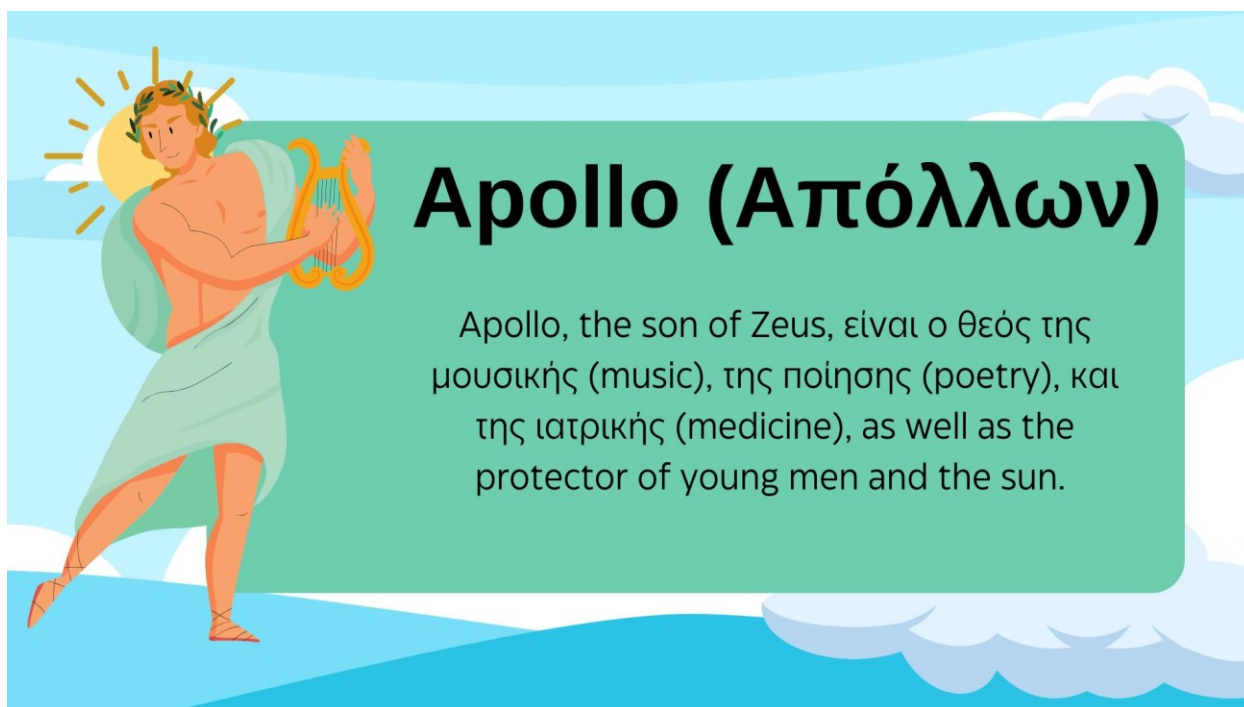
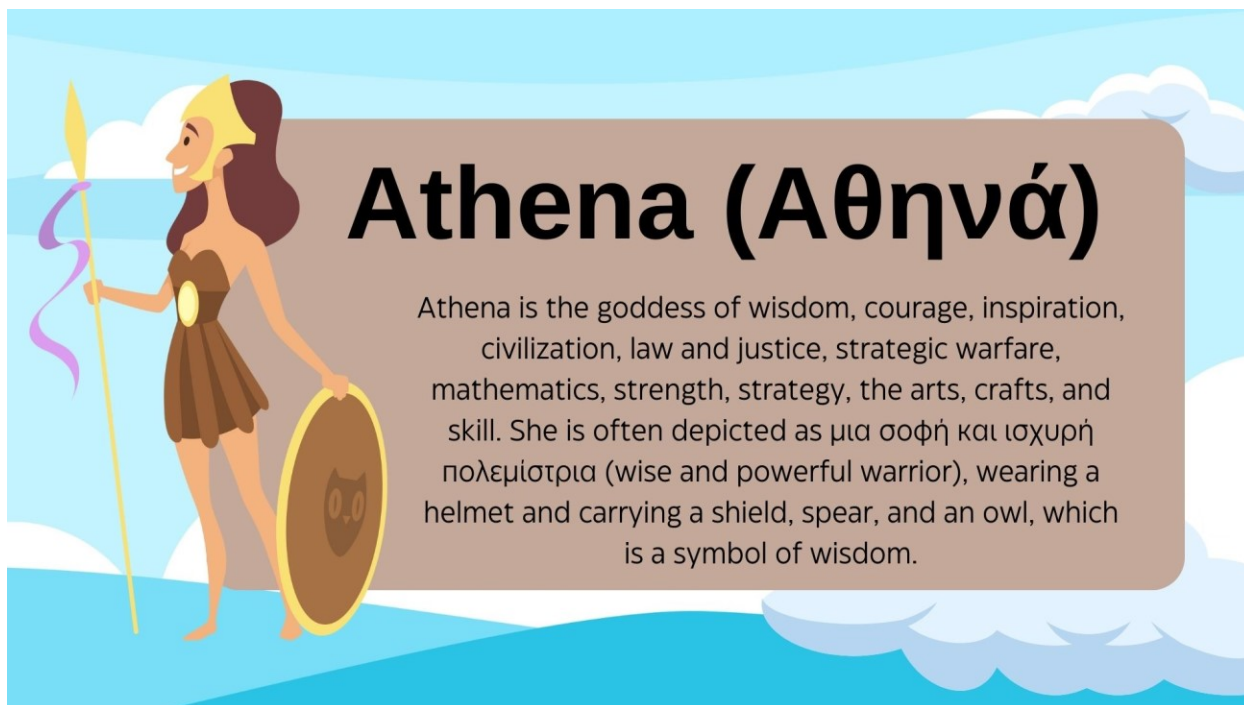
Zeus - Δίας

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Poseidon (Ποσειδώνας)

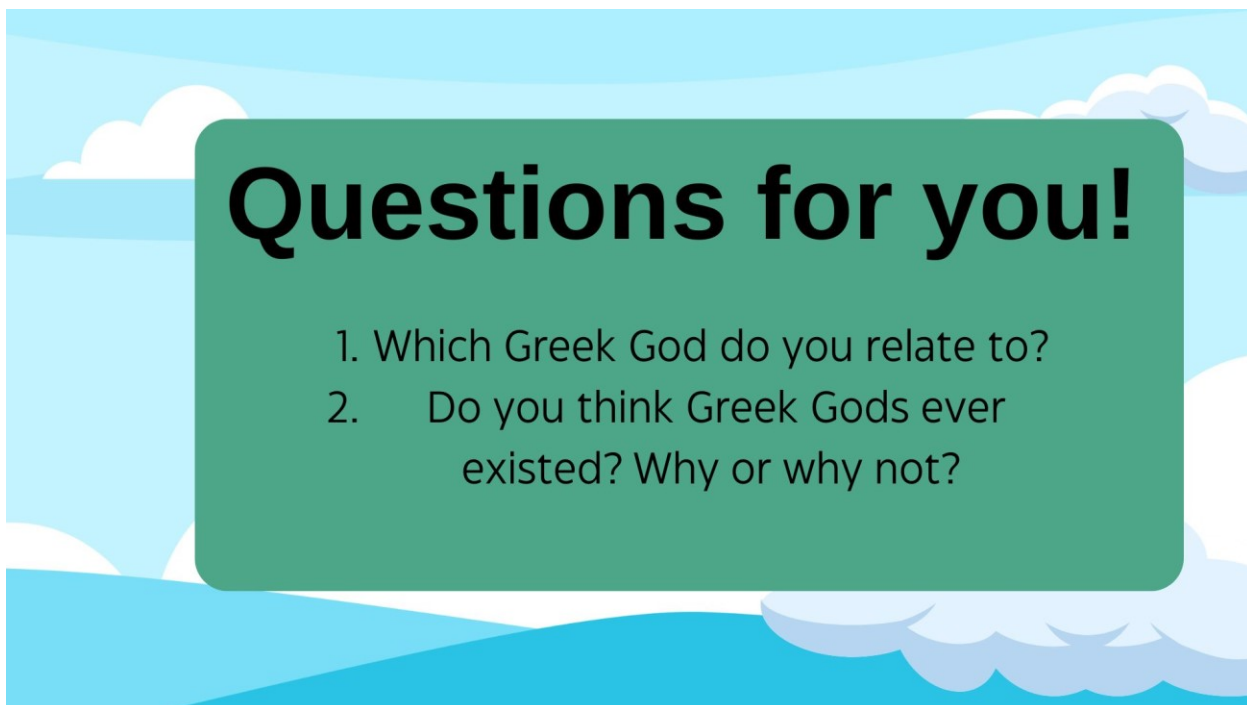
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Questions for you!

1. Which Greek God do you relate to?
2. Do you think Greek Gods ever existed? Why or why not?



Appendix 5

Name: _____

Group: _____

Post-Project Reflection

1. What part of your presentation are you most proud of?

2. If you could change something in your presentation, what would it be?

3. How did you feel while you were presenting? (happy, nervous, excited, etc.). Did you feel good about using your home language? Why or why not?

4. How did sharing your culture with your classmates make you feel?

5. Is learning languages important to you? Why or why not?

6. What advice would you give to someone who is nervous about giving a presentation?

Appendix 6

Observation Grid

Date: _____

<u>Category</u>	<u>Guiding Questions</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Students' collaboration and interaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are students working together to create their multilingual presentation? 2. Are students actively helping each other? 3. Are students providing constructive feedback to each other? 	

Observation Grid

Date: _____

Students' affect and emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are they actively contributing, or do some seem hesitant or withdrawn? 2. Are students encouraging and supporting each other, or is there tension in the group? 3. Do students hesitate before speaking or switching languages? Why might that be? 4. Are students expressing any frustration or anxiety about the project? How are they handling it? 	
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Observation Grid

Date: _____

Teacher's role in facilitation during the group work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What role do you play in facilitating collaboration? 2. How are you guiding students? Are you offering prompts, guidance or modeling certain behaviours? 3. What strategies are you using to keep all students engaged? 	
---	--	--

Observation Grid

Date: _____

Development of language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are students acquiring and using new vocabulary in both English and their other languages? 2. Are students including grammatical rules? 3. Are students working on their pronunciation and intonation in both English and other languages? 	
--------------------------------	---	--

Observation Grid

Date: _____

Student motivation and engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Are students showing enthusiasm for using their home languages alongside English?2. Are students facing any challenges while using a second or third language?3. Are students engaged and motivated?	
--	---	--