Research and Inquiry

Multilingual Learners' Writing Experiences in an English-Dominant Class: Instructional Implications for Students' Equitable Learning Experiences

Bogum Yoon
Binghamton University

Diana Murtaugh
Binghamton University

Correspondence
Bogum Yoon
byoon@binghamton.edu

Multilingual Learners' Writing Experiences in an English-Dominant Class: Instructional Implications for Students' Equitable Learning Experiences
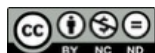
Bogum Yoon, *Binghamton University*
Diana Murtaugh, *Binghamton University*

Abstract

Research suggests that multilingual learners' (MLLs) positive writing experiences and the inclusion of their cultural identities in the classroom improve their language and literacy development. However, the nuance and context in middle-grade MLLs' voice and writing examples are lacking. Drawing from a larger qualitative study that examined how teachers collaborated to support MLLs in an English Language Arts (ELA) setting, this study focuses on how young adolescent MLLs describe their writing experiences in a collaborative ELA class and how their cultural identities are depicted in their writing examples. The findings suggest that middle grades MLLs expressed positive experiences in the English-dominant class but also shared difficulties in longer essays, English grammar, and spelling. Additionally, when middle grades MLLs were offered opportunities to connect literacy activities to their home culture, they were more engaged in sharing their cross-cultural identities in writing. The study provides implications that middle grades teachers develop young adolescent MLLs' cross-cultural and linguistic identities concurrently, not separately, to engage in writing activities.

Multilingual learners (MLLs), *individuals learning English as an additional language*, are increasingly present in U.S. classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022; Villegas et al., 2018). Oftentimes, MLLs receive instruction from an English as a second language (ESL) teacher and a content area teacher, such as English language arts (ELA), to support MLLs in the English-dominant class. While engaging in new language learning, it is paramount for these students to maintain their primary language and culture through robust writing experiences. Numerous scholars (e.g., de Oliveira, 2016; Ishaq et al., 2022; Ponzio, 2020) claim that MLLs' primary language and culture play a critical role in their successful writing, which should be sustained and valued.

Tapping into primary language and culture requires pedagogical approaches "that empower and center diverse student populations" (Waker et al., 2024, p. 1). Research in MLLs' writing and cultural identities in middle school settings, however, is lacking (Assaf, 2014; Hodges, 2017; Yoon, 2021). Through an extensive literature review, we found that most of the studies on MLLs' writing were conducted in college settings (e.g., Doolan & Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2016; Kurzer, 2018), through the pre/posttest method (e.g., Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016; David, 2016), or in English as a foreign language courses outside of the United States (e.g., Suvin,

2020; Yusuf et al., 2019). Although there have been some studies on adolescent MLLs (e.g., Kibler et al., 2018; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2017; Yi, 2013), it is rare to find contemporary studies that explore adolescents' writing and their cultural identities at the middle school level. More studies must examine the complexities and nuances that young adolescent MLLs experience in writing.

Based on data from classroom observations, interviews, and artifacts, this paper aims to report on the writing experiences and cultural identities of middle grade MLLs in an English-dominant classroom, as reflected in their writing samples. The paper draws on data from a larger qualitative study, collected in a middle school collaborative ELA class over one academic semester (Yoon, 2023). The research questions that guided the current project were:

1. How do middle grade MLLs describe their writing experiences in the ELA classroom?

2. How do the students' writing samples portray their cultural identities?

In this paper, we highlight the analysis of two seventh grade MLLs' writing samples, focusing on form and content to address the first question and cultural identities to address the second question.

We aim to provide instructional implications for MLLs' equitable learning experiences in an English-dominant context.

This qualitative study on the two students' cases does not generalize the findings but provides context and nuance through the students' voices and writing examples. These two students—one from an Arabic language background and the other from a Vietnamese language background—agreed to participate in the study and share their writing materials. The details of the students are described in the methodology section.

Theoretical Perspectives

Second language acquisition (SLA) theories (Brown, 2014; Cummins & Swain, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013) provided an overarching framework. SLA explains that second language learning is complex and requires diverse dimensions, including MLLs' primary language and identities. Within this overarching framework of SLA, identity theory (Norton, 2000, 2013) was employed to analyze the writing of middle grade MLLs. From a sociocultural orientation, this lens served as a useful tool for interpreting the students' writing data and cultural identities. In this paper, the second language is English.

Before the 2000s, the field of second language studies was dominated by cognitive perspectives such as information processing and memory (see Yoon & Pratt, 2023, for a historical overview of the field). However, identity theory (Darvin & Norton, 2023; Norton, 2000, 2013), a school of thought on the relationship between language learning and identity, contributed to the field by shifting from cognitive to sociocultural standpoints. Scholars (Hall, 1996; Yazan, 2018) define identity(ies) in various ways, such as self-perception, subjectivity, and voice. It is based on how scholars approach it: essentialist or non-essentialist (i.e., anti-essentialist). Essentialist perspectives, which were dominant until the 1990s, emphasize identity as a fixed notion—*who I am*—while non-essentialist perspectives approach identity as an ongoing and flexible construct—*who I become in a given context*—informed by ecological perspectives (Yoon, 2012).

Due to the complex nature of identity development processes, non-essentialist perspectives are increasingly gaining recognition. For example, the study by Hughes and Morrison (2014) in a middle school context demonstrates how MLLs' identities are continually shaped through interactions and relationships. When MLLs were given opportunities to participate in diverse communities, including online platforms, and to connect learning to their personal experiences, they became more actively engaged in learning activities.

Identity theory in second language education has developed alongside related frameworks, such as positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; McVee et al., 2019), which examines power dynamics that arise during interactions, including determining which language holds greater power in a particular context and its implementation in classroom settings, as demonstrated in studies by Yoon (2007, 2012) and Hamman-Ortirez (2019). From this point, scholars such as Moje and Luke (2009) view identity as positioning that constantly shifts based on individuals' self-positioning, such as their self-perception, and others' positioning, such as how they are positioned through interaction. In middle grades contexts, when classrooms welcome MLLs' diverse linguistic repertoires and cultural references, they have more opportunities to position themselves as powerful, influencing their language and literacy learning (Uliassi, 2019).

Identity formation is a complex process that cannot be easily summarized. As a result, how scholars approach identity research is equally complex and diverse. Norton (2000) approaches identity from the perspective of relationship. Norton's ideas of identity are grounded in poststructuralist worldviews, which emphasize that identity is not fixed but is continually constructed through language, social interaction, and power dynamics; such views highlight individuals' negotiable and transitional characteristics across contexts.

For example, Norton (2000) defines identity as an individual's relationship with a larger worldview. According to Norton and McKinney (2011), individuals first recognize their identities in relation to those in a local context and then apply them within a larger community. Based on this, MLLs will (re)negotiate a sense of self within a larger community through language and literacy practices (Norton & McKinney). For instance, students from a Spanish language background will negotiate their sense of self in relation to both

Spanish and American cultures while writing. Therefore, MLLs view themselves as part of a home culture and new culture, and through writing, they have opportunities to connect with and (re)construct their home culture identities within a larger community.

Scholars from a non-essentialist perspective describe MLLs' identities as cross-cultural (shaped by interactions between different cultures), transnational (spanning physical and symbolic borders between countries), and translanguaging (drawing on multiple languages as both a learning resource and a communicative repertoire), highlighting that learners' identities are dynamic rather than fixed by categories like ethnicity. Although MLLs live in the United States, they constantly engage in their primary language and culture through travel, communicating with family abroad through communication technology, such as Zoom and Facetime, and consuming products. As Lam (2014) noted, MLLs are considered transnationals who continue to link to their home country, developing their cross-cultural, transnational, and translanguaging identities; therefore, within an identity theory framework, connecting middle grades MLLs writing activities to cultural identities is crucial for their language and literacy development.

In sum, identity theory, which focuses on individuals' multiplicities, provides a useful lens for analyzing the current study's data on middle grade MLLs' writing experiences and cultural identities. These perspectives provide insights into what should be considered to support young adolescent MLLs' language and literacy learning.

Literature Review on MLLs' Writing

An extensive review of literature was conducted on MLLs' writing literacy and cultural identities in middle school settings. As noted earlier, research focusing on secondary level writing from the perspectives of MLLs is limited. Among the existing studies, many examine college students or other adult learners (David, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2017; Lin, 2015), explore English as a foreign language contexts (Suvin, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2019), or discuss issues within writing instruction, such as corrective feedback (Brown, 2012; Hartshorn et al., 2010). There is also a variety of scholarly work providing classroom strategies or tools for teachers working with MLLs' writing

(Assaf, 2014; Brandon & Hurd, 2024; Pacheco et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2025; Wolf & Oh, 2024). However, these studies either examine teachers' perspectives (Assaf, 2014; Brandon & Hurd, 2024; Pacheco et al., 2019), rely on assessment data (Wilson et al., 2025), or, when student writing is included, focus on teachers' comments rather than students' work (Wolf & Oh, 2024). It remains challenging to find research that investigates young adolescent MLLs' writing experiences from their own perspectives and cultural identities.

Despite this gap in the literature, there are documented advances in the writing instruction of MLLs in English-speaking contexts, mainly regarding the integration of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into the classroom. Research in secondary settings suggests that MLLs need writing opportunities that recognize their unique linguistic and cultural experiences, which differ from those of their English-speaking peers (Jwa, 2018; Mason, 2006; Peercy, 2011; Wyse, 2018). Incorporating students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and giving them chances to access their funds of knowledge can be achieved if teachers prioritize it (Yoon, 2023; Yoon & Pratt, 2023) by moving beyond the traditional academic essay and connecting academic and lived experiences to affirm their identities through meaningful and diverse writing opportunities (Assaf, 2014; Ostrow & Ning Chang, 2012; Wyse, 2018). The influence of including cultural identities in writing is significant; students' writing improves when their identities are acknowledged (Kang & Veitch, 2017; Skerrett, 2013) and can decline if home identities are viewed through a deficit perspective (Yi, 2013).

Coinciding with cultural integration, students' linguistic identities should also be considered in adolescent writing. Wolf and Oh (2024) discovered that middle school MLLs received significantly more feedback on their writing than non-MLL students; however, this feedback was heavily focused on grammar and mechanics and not on content. Instead, teachers could recognize the impact of students' primary language on their English meaning-making (Yoon & Pratt, 2023). For example, native Bengali speakers often use gendered pronouns interchangeably in their English learning since Bengali does not have gendered pronouns (Pratt-Johnson & Bhattacharyya, 2023). Therefore, it makes sense that this primary language influence would appear

in English writing. With this understanding, teachers who see students' primary language as an asset to be harnessed rather than a deficit to be overcome can better support middle-grade MLLs in improving their writing comprehension (Song & Kiaer, 2023: Yoon & Pratt, 2023) and perhaps move beyond grammar and mechanics and focus on content.

Even with these documented gains in MLLs' writing experiences, the students' specific work as a data point is sparse. As far as we can tell, one study collected writing samples from their identity development (Skerrett, 2013). Those who collected writing samples tended to review the data through the lens of error analysis or language transference (Barone & Cargile, 2020; Eckstein & Ferris, 2018), teacher effectiveness (Choi & Wong, 2018), implementation of automated writing evaluation programs (Wolf & Oh, 2024), or writer development over time (Squire & Clark, 2020). Several studies relied upon surveys conducted by either the student, who, in most cases, are adult learners (Maliborska & You, 2016; Woodrich & Fan, 2017), or the teacher (Copland et al., 2014; Fernandez et al., 2017).

We have found that adolescents' voices and writing, specifically in a middle school setting, were not used as data and analyzed according to the student's cultural and linguistic identities. This reality prompted us to wonder what middle grade MLLs' writing looks like and what that reveals about their experiences in an English-speaking classroom. For equal learning opportunities, are they fully engaged in writing practice in the classroom? Teachers must approach middle grades MLLs' learning through their voices and examples, using classroom data to inform instruction. In this study, we hope to understand how their cultural identities impact their writing experiences in a middle grade English-dominant classroom.

Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach, defined as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit' (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). This approach is well-suited for examining the voices and lived experiences of two middle grade MLLs through analyses of their writing

samples, observations, and interviews, as these students were situated within a bounded system—an English-speaking classroom context. The case study design allows for an in-depth exploration of how their linguistic and cultural identities shaped their writing. As noted earlier, this study was drawn from a larger data set of a qualitative study on teacher collaboration (Yoon, 2023). Therefore, the school context, participants, and data sources such as classroom observations remain the same.

Study Context

As a researcher, I (Bogum, the first author) conducted this study during one semester of a seventh grade ELA class at a public middle school in New York State. This school serves 550 students: 6% Asian, 10% Hispanic, 13% Black, 61% White, and 10% bi/multi races with 71% receiving free/reduced lunch. The school was purposefully selected because it enrolls the largest number of MLLs in the district (approximately 120 students): "42% Asian, 37% White, 13% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 3% bi/multiracial" (Yoon, 2023, p. 128). This purposeful selection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed us to examine MLLs' writing experiences in a setting where MLLs represent a substantial and diverse portion of the student population. As a non-participant observer, I observed all MLLs (5) in an ELA class of 17. Of the five MLLs in the classroom, only two students, Aiden and Milo, returned parental consent forms and assented to participate.

The ESL teacher (white, female, monolingual) was present in the ELA classroom to support MLLs' learning. The ELA teacher (white, female, monolingual) collaborated with the ESL teacher to support MLLs (see Yoon, 2023). Instead of bifurcating their roles, the teachers combined their efforts and worked as a team: the ELA teacher addressed questions from MLLs, and the ESL teacher assisted other students in their writing assignments.

Participants

The two students who agreed to participate were Aiden and Milo (all names are pseudonyms), who were 13 years old and in the seventh grade. At the start of the school year, they completed The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), which "is

designed to annually assess the English language proficiency of all English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in Grades K-12 in New York State schools" (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2023, para. 1). This test uses a ranking system: *entering* (beginning), *emerging* (low intermediate)*, transitioning* (intermediate)*, expanding* (advanced*), and commanding* (proficient). Aiden ranked 'expanding,' and Milo ranked 'commanding,' (Yoon, 2023, pp. 128-129).

Based on their rankings, they were placed in the general education classroom and Milo was not required to participate in ESL instruction; however, according to the NYSED, the students in the commanding level are still identified as English language learners and are "entitled to receive two years of Former ELL services" Although they are advanced learners, the ESL teacher still supported them in the "pushed in" classroom to help them develop English language and literacy. In this paper, we refer to them as MLLs who are learning English as an additional language.

Although Aiden was born in the United States, his primary language is not English but Vietnamese. In an interview, Aiden described himself as "smart" and "social." According to the ESL teacher, Aiden was close to testing out of the ESL program with the rank of commanding, but ultimately scored expanding, which means he "shows great independence in advancing academic language skills and is approaching the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings)" (NYSED, 2024). Additionally, she felt that Aiden's focus on academic work had slipped from previous years.

Milo moved to the United States as an infant from Sudan, where Arabic is the primary language. In an interview, he described himself as "independent" and the first of five children. Due to his father's job, he has lived in many states as well as in Egypt, where Arabic is spoken, for three years. Both the ESL and ELA teachers shared that Milo is "smart," but they were concerned about his writing as it often wanders from the intended topic (see examples in the Findings section).

Data Sources

Data sources include a researcher's log, field notes from classroom observations, and audio recordings with transcripts of two individual student interviews. Artifacts, including the students' writing samples and worksheets, were also collected at the final interview at the end of the semester for data analysis on form and content.

Student interviews were conducted twice at school, with each session lasting one class period (approximately 40 minutes). During the first interview, participants discussed their personal experiences related to their home lives and schooling. The second interview addressed more specific aspects of their language and literacy confidence and their perceptions of support from the teachers. The first was conducted midway through the semester, while the second was held at the end.

Since the current study was built upon a previous study (Yoon, 2023) regarding teacher collaboration for MLLs, the interview questions focused on how teachers supported students' language and literacy development rather than on culture. Research Question 2 (RQ2), which addresses culture, was developed as part of an exploratory analysis based on the two MLLs' writing samples. The cultural components were identified by analyzing their written work after the final interview; I did not have the opportunity to ask the students to confirm or elaborate on my analysis of their cultural identities.

Therefore, only the students' writing samples were used to address RQ2. This exploratory approach is consistent with qualitative research practices, which allow researchers to identify patterns and emergent themes when initial data suggest new avenues of inquiry. Triangulation with additional data, such as interviews and students' reflections on their writing, would have strengthened the analysis. I consider this a limitation of the study, as their explanations could have provided a deeper understanding of their voices. Despite this limitation, the writing samples served as important data sources for addressing the research questions regarding the students' experiences and cultural identities.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, Corbin and Strauss's (2015) coding strategies (e.g., open, axial, and selective coding) and Stake's (2006) within-case and cross-case analysis methods were employed. Guided by identity theory (Norton, 2000, 2013), Aiden's

and Milo's cases were individually analyzed for within-case, followed by cross-case analysis to find common themes.

During open coding, the data was categorized to obtain the "bigger" picture. Based on the initial codes and the research questions (RQ), data was reviewed multiple times to develop categories: "strengths" and "challenges" (RQ 1), and "home culture" and "U.S. culture" (RQ 2). For instance, when students demonstrated an understanding of literary elements (e.g., similes) in their writing samples, it was a strength. When students did not finish their writing assignments, it was a challenge. At times, the writing data was compared to the observational data to support coding. Additionally, it is cross-cultural when the students connect their home culture (e.g., family, cultural reference) and U.S. culture (e.g., KFC).

Next, these broader categories were further examined through axial coding, which focused on connecting the categories. In this process, multiple subcategories of strengths and challenges were developed (RQ 1). In this process, strengths were

connected to "positive experiences," such as making paragraphs, and to "a positive view of their teachers' support." In contrast, challenges are linked to "struggles in longer writing projects," "numerous grammar mistakes," and "primary language impact on learning English." The broader categories of strengths and challenges in the open coding stage were supported by several subcategories in the axial coding process, which focused on connecting the categories. Regarding the categories of "home culture" and "U.S. culture" (RQ 2), the following subcategories were further developed: "identities situated in home culture," "identities grounded in U.S. culture," and "transitioning identities in various cultural contexts."

Finally, the developed subcategories through the axial coding process must be further examined to recognize how the categories are connected. This led to selective coding to develop themes. For example, "positive experiences" and "struggles in longer writing projects" led to the bigger theme of "mixed findings: positive and challenging experiences." The subcategories "identities situated in home culture," "identities grounded in U.S.

Table 1
Coding Process

Coding Types	Purpose	Developed Themes	Supporting Examples and Inclusive Themes
Open Coding	Examining and categorizing data	RQ 1: Strengths and Challenges	• Strength: literary elements • Challenge: longer essay
		RQ 2: Home Culture and USA Culture	• Home culture: family in Vietnam • U.S. culture: KFC
Axial Coding	Making connections among categories	RQ 1: Strengths connect to positive experiences Challenges connect struggles	• Write paragraphs easily and share their teachers' support • Longer essay, grammar mistakes, & primary language impact
		RQ 2: Home and USA culture connect to MLLs' transitioning identities	• Identities situated in home culture • Identities grounded in U.S. culture • Transitioning identities in various cultural contexts
Selective Coding	Validating the relationships among the categories	RQ 1: Positive experiences and struggles co-exist: Mixed findings	• Inclusive theme on MLLs' writing experience: Positive and challenging experiences
		RQ 2: MLLs' constant moving identities between home & USA contexts	• Inclusive theme on MLLs' identity: Cross-cultural identities

Note: This analysis process was based on Corbin and Strauss's (2015) coding strategies.

culture," and "transitioning identities in various cultural contexts" led to the theme of "cross-cultural identities."

The developed themes in each case were reexamined for cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) to identify and confirm the common themes between Aiden and Milo. At this part of the process, a second author was added to confirm developed themes and aid in data interpretation. The findings in Table 1 represent the common themes of the two MLLs' writing experiences in the ELA classroom and the portrayal of cross-cultural identities.

Researcher Positionality and Study Background

Given that a researcher is an instrument in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yoon & Uliassi, 2022) and influences data collection, interpretation, and outcome (Chapman, 2007), it is important to share my positionality. I am an active member in the field of middle grades education. I am a multilingual teacher educator in literacy education and have conducted qualitative studies in diverse classroom settings, including elementary, middle, and high schools, to examine MLLs' literacy activities and their teachers' instructional support. I work in a literacy teacher education program with pre-/in-service teachers, who are primarily white and monolingual, to help them support MLLs from equity and justice-based approaches.

While collecting data on how an ELA teacher works with an ESL teacher to support MLLs in the general education classroom (Yoon, 2023), I observed that the middle grades MLLs appear to struggle in writing, particularly with longer essays and brainstorming ideas. This observation led me to shift my focus to the students' writing experiences in the classroom.

I also worked with the second author (Diana), who contributed to data interpretation. She has several years of experience as an ELA teacher, a college-level writing instructor at a large university, and a supervisor of pre-service ELA teachers during their student teaching placement. Her insight is that of a monolingual ELA teacher, practitioner, and trainer. As an ELA teacher, she has reviewed hundreds of writing assignments from adolescent writers. She helped interpret the two middle

grades MLLs' writing samples and recognized the different patterns from students who use English as their primary language. During the students' writing analysis, I communicated with her to (dis)confirm my interpretation of the students' writing patterns to validate my data interpretation.

In this paper, I refer to the researcher and first author as "I," and use "we" to refer to both the first and second authors. When presenting MLLs' writing examples, brackets [ ] indicate editorial corrections, clarifications, or omissions of grammatical elements.

Findings

The findings suggest that these two advanced-level middle grades students expressed positive experiences overall in the English-dominant class. However, they also shared difficulties with form (e.g., grammar and spelling), which differ from their primary language. When students incorporated their home culture into their writing, their engagement improved, enhancing both the form and content of their English skills. The findings will be discussed to address the first research question, followed by the second one.

Positive and Challenging Writing Experiences

Aiden and Milo shared mixed feelings about their writing experience in the collaborative ELA class, finding it both positive and challenging. During the interviews, Aiden expressed that his writing skills were "pretty good" and "I can make paragraphs easily. If I have information, it's not difficult." Milo also shared that "English is easy," and "my grade is 90 something." These remarks show that they have confidence in their writing. My observations support the interview data. Unlike the other MLLs I observed who took longer to complete writing tasks, such as responding to literature in their worksheets, or who relied on English-speaking partners for guidance, these two students completed most assignments quickly and independently.

They attributed their positive experiences to the support from the teachers. Regarding the ELA teacher, Milo shared that the teacher "explains a whole thing step-by-step" and was comfortable asking the ELA teacher questions. Aiden also

shared that she "is supportive" and provided him with an extension for the writing assignment. Additionally, the teacher's self-created module unit lesson packets, which contained various student assignment aids such as graphic organizers, provided guided support for the students. Based on the classroom observations, Aiden and Milo looked comfortable participating in writing tasks in the packets. For instance, they completed plot mapping quickly, including identifying the rising action, after reading *Colin Fischer* (Miller & Stentz, 2012).

Although they shared positive experiences in writing in the classroom, they also shared struggles. The interview data demonstrated that they struggled to write essays that included an introduction, main text, and conclusion. Aiden stated, "I don't want to do a longer essay." He shared that his ELA grade was a 74, and his math and science grades were above 90. He proudly shared his strength in math and science with a strong voice but quietly stated, "The hardest one is ELA for me."

Figure 1
Aiden's Worksheet Example

Aiden's struggle in writing is also confirmed through the observation data and his writing sample. As noted earlier, Aiden completed worksheets responding to adolescent literature quickly and easily (see Figure 1). However, when discussing essays, he repeatedly shared in the interview that essays were challenging. Referring to a longer essay with an introduction, main text, and conclusion, he said, "The hardest one is ELA for me."

I observed that many students in the classroom worked independently and completed their essays, while Aiden did not. He was sometimes away from his desk and wandering around the classroom. He only returned to his desk after the ELA or the ESL teacher signaled him to sit down and concentrate on his work, supporting the ESL teacher's comments about Aiden losing focus from previous years.

Milo also expressed challenges in writing. Milo shared that he struggled with grammar and finding essay topics. He said, "Grammar is the one I need to improve" and "When I had [have] an idea, [it is] easy to write." This was confirmed in the observation data. Even though the class wrote their essays, Milo sat quietly and did not write. When the ELA teacher told him to write about his recent trip to Egypt with his family, he had no problem beginning the assignment.

Milo did not appear to have any issues in completing graphic organizers. However, he struggled to transfer information from graphic organizers to essays. In his essay, grammar mistakes were common. For example, Milo often missed using capital letters ("One second i'm hanging of the horse the next second i see a hoove knocking me unconscious"). He not only used lowercase in the first-person pronouns, but also in proper nouns, as shown in Figure 2: *new york*, not *New York*; *home alone*, not *Home Alone*, the movie;

and *eid*, not *Eid*, the Muslim holiday. It is unclear where his mistakes originate. One plausible reason might be related to his primary language, Arabic. Arabic does not have capital letters, and Milo's writing reflects this pattern, a sign of the primary language's influence on English transference.

Grammar mistakes in longer essays were also evident in Aiden's writing samples. Although his writing shows a good grasp of English structure, such as the order of subject, verb, and object, which is the same as in Vietnamese, he omitted plural forms and complementizers. In Vietnamese, nouns, adjectives, and verbs do not take plural markers like the English "-s," which may explain errors. Thus, the omission of plural forms and complementizers is common (Nguyen et al., 2023), and this transfer pattern is evident in Aiden's writing (see Figure 3).

Specifically, Aiden used "are" after *hug*; he missed the plural form "-s" to be consistent with

Figure 2
Milo's Memoir Example
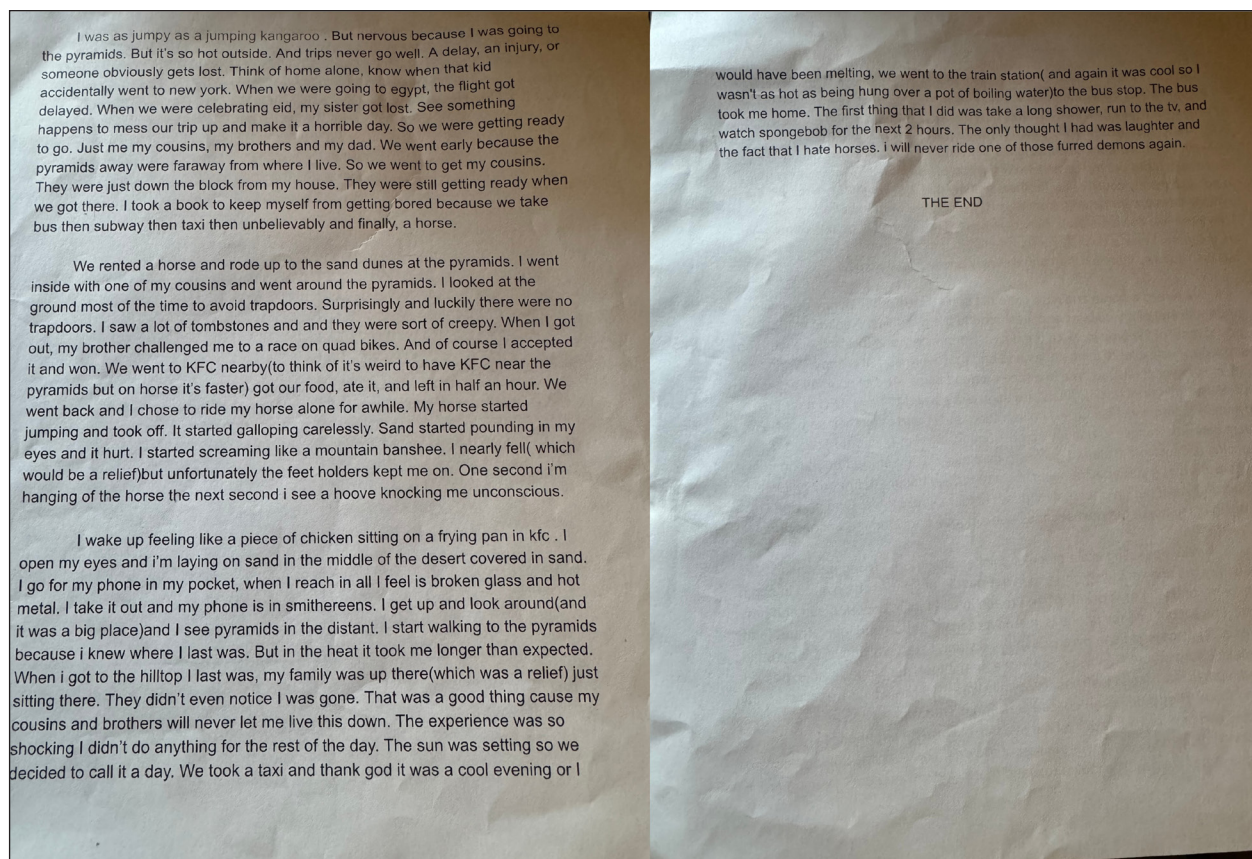
the noun and the be-verb form, as in *hug* and *are*. From an English grammar perspective, "hugs are" is correct, but Aiden mixed subject-verb agreement between singular and plural. He also omitted "-s" in the sentence "there are many thing to do," again showing a subject-verb agreement error. This omission of plural forms is consistent in Aiden's writing. In Vietnamese, "embedded clauses in complex sentences are not marked with complementizers (e.g., *tha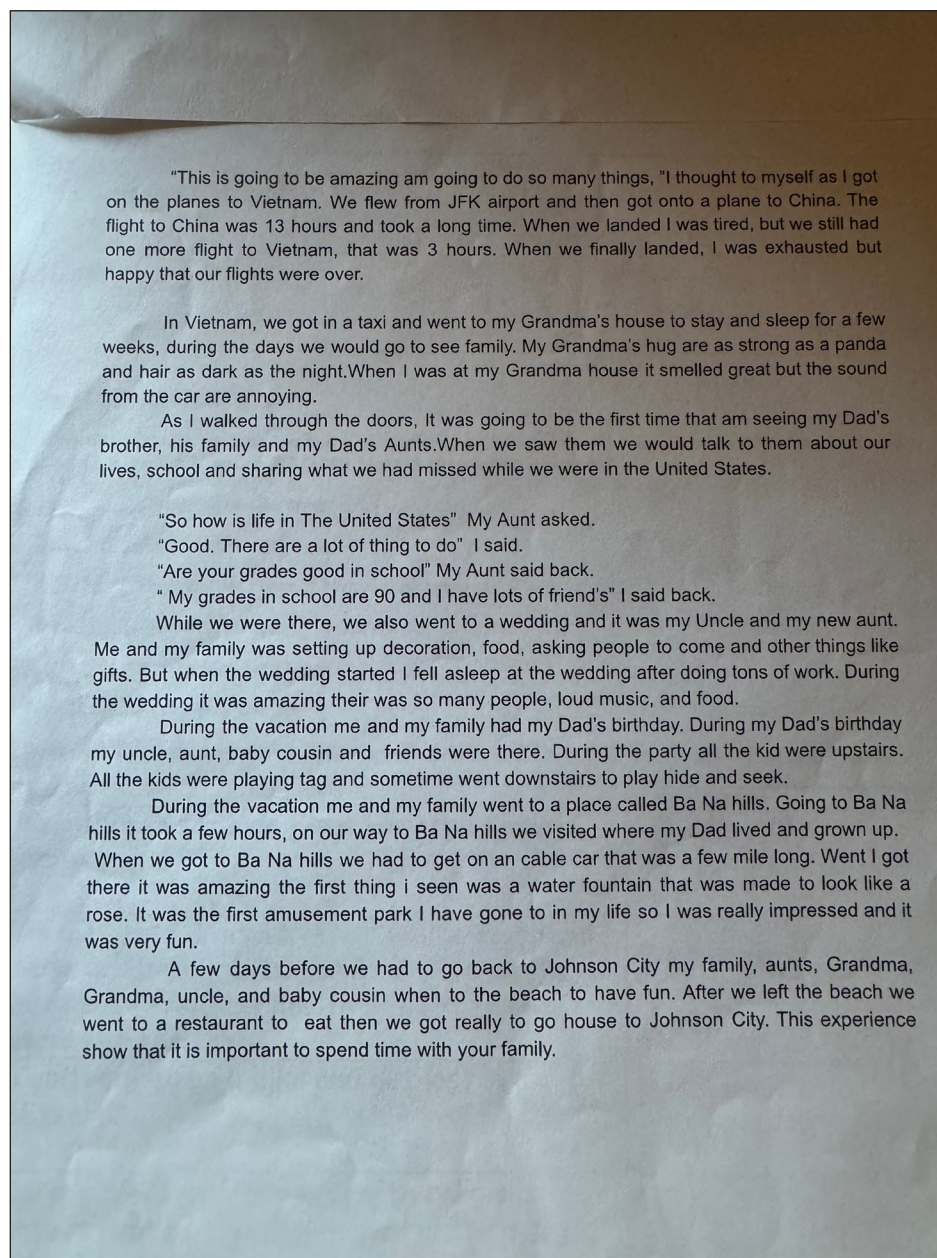t*) as in English" (Nguyen et al., 2023, p. 105). As shown in the sentence, "This is going to be amazing am going to do so many things," Aiden omitted "that I" before "am going to do so many things."

An intriguing finding is that he used "many things" in this sentence compared to the previous examples such as "many thing," the singular form. This shows that Aiden has English grammar ability but is not conscious of his use in writing. It appears that the two students' primary language influenced how they wrote in English. However, the data did not show they were aware of this linguistic difference.

Figure 3
Aiden's Memoir Example

"This is going to be amazing am going to do so many things, "I thought to myself as I got on the planes to Vietnam. We flew from JFK airport and then got onto a plane to China. The flight to China was 13 hours and took a long time. When we landed I was tired, but we still had one more flight to Vietnam, that was 3 hours. When we finally landed, I was exhausted but happy that our flights were over.

In Vietnam, we got in a taxi and went to my Grandma's house to stay and sleep for a few weeks, during the days we would go to see family. My Grandma's hug are as strong as a panda and hair as dark as the night.When I was at my Grandma house it smelled great but the sound from the car are annoying.

As I walked through the doors, It was going to be the first time that am seeing my Dad's brother, his family and my Dad's Aunts.When we saw them we would talk to them about our lives, school and sharing what we had missed while we were in the United States.

"So how is life in The United States" My Aunt asked.
"Good. There are a lot of thing to do" I said.
"Are your grades good in school" My Aunt said back.
" My grades in school are 90 and I have lots of friend's" I said back.

While we were there, we also went to a wedding and it was my Uncle and my new aunt. Me and my family was setting up decoration, food, asking people to come and other things like gifts. But when the wedding started I fell asleep at the wedding after doing tons of work. During the wedding it was amazing their was so many people, loud music, and food.

During the vacation me and my family had my Dad's birthday. During my Dad's birthday my uncle, aunt, baby cousin and friends were there. During the party all the kid were upstairs. All the kids were playing tag and sometime went downstairs to play hide and seek.

During the vacation me and my family went to a place called Ba Na hills. Going to Ba Na hills it took a few hours, on our way to Ba Na hills we visited where my Dad lived and grown up. When we got to Ba Na hills we had to get on an cable car that was a few mile long. Went I got there it was amazing the first thing i seen was a water fountain that was made to look like a rose. It was the first amusement park I have gone to in my life so I was really impressed and it was very fun.

A few days before we had to go back to Johnson City my family, aunts, Grandma, Grandma, uncle, and baby cousin when to the beach to have fun. After we left the beach we went to a restaurant to eat then we got really to go house to Johnson City. This experience show that it is important to spend time with your family.

their family and culture. Based on their writing samples, Aiden and Milo demonstrated their ability to connect common English literary techniques, such as similes, to their home culture and promote engagement in English language learning.

For example, Aiden wrote of his visit to Vietnam: "My Grandma's hug[s] are as strong as a panda and [her] hair [is] as dark as the night" (see Figure 3). In this writing, he used similes to express his feelings

Cross-Cultural Identities in Writing

Both middle grades students' cross-cultural identities were shown in their writing by connecting

Figure 4
Aiden's Incomplete Assignment Example

wrote about his family's trip to Egypt for his memoir project. In it, he used similes to express his excitement about going to see the pyramids in Egypt: "I was as jumpy as a jumping kangaroo," and, regarding how the sand hurt his eyes, "I started screaming like a mountain banshee" (see Figure 2). An interesting point is that he used a mountain banshee, which is from the U.S.-produced movie *Avatar*. We can see his cross-cultural identities in his writing: he drew on U.S. cultural experiences to express his experiences in Egypt. As noted earlier, he lived in Egypt for three years, close to his home country, Sudan. Using similes and cultural references, he connected to his previous experiences with excitement.

These examples from the two middle grades students demonstrate their familiarity with literary elements and their connection to home culture and previous experiences. They also show that ELA content, including literary elements, is integrated into their language and literacy skills, such as writing in memoir form, and into cross-cultural experiences, such as references to the United States and Egypt.

about his grandmother's strong hugs and her dark hair. Although his sentence is grammatically inaccurate by English language standards, it does not hinder the meaning of his grandmother's welcoming gesture. A notable aspect is that he referenced a panda, a common figure in Asian countries as a symbol of strength, possibly drawing on this cultural symbol to represent his grandmother's hugs, thereby showcasing his cross-cultural identity in his writing.

Milo's data also showed his cross-cultural identities in his writing. Taking his teacher's advice, Milo

An intriguing finding is that when students have a choice in topics for writing assignments related to their personal experiences and family events in their home culture, they tend to be more enthusiastic and include a wider range of voices. Based on my observations, Aiden was less attentive to classroom activities, such as worksheets and responding to the class readings. The teachers often signaled for him to return to his desk. However, this—when he had assignments related to his personal experiences

Yoon, B., & Murtaugh, D. (2025). Multilingual learners' writing experiences in an English-dominant class: Instructional implications for students' equitable learning experiences. *Middle Grades Review, 11*(2). https://doi.org/10.70793/mgr.269

and family events—was one of the few moments he focused on his writing.

Compared to his writing example in the worksheet (see Figure 4), which shows an incomplete assignment with a very brief discussion and is hard to decipher, his memoir assignment is extensive and connects his cross-cultural identities.

For instance, as noted in Figure 3, Aiden added dialogue between him and his aunt:

> "So how is life in [t]he United States[?]" My Aunt asked.
> "Good. There are a lot of thing[s] to do" I said.
> "Are your grades good in school[?]" My Aunt said back.
> "My grades in school are 90 and I have lots of friend's [friends]" I said back.

In this sample, Aiden's voice is clear: he selected an aunt as one of his family members to illustrate his life in the United States. Through dialogue, he showed his academic work and his social life. He told his aunt that he had many things to do, but he managed well. In this conversation, Aiden presents his identity as an academically and socially strong student in the United States. His ELA grade was a 74, but he did not mention this; instead, he focused on higher grades in other subjects, showing that his identity is situational. Milo's voice and his cross-cultural identities—reflecting both his home culture and the U.S. classroom culture—are also evident in his writing. In an interview, he shared that when his parents are not available, he must watch his younger siblings. He found this frustrating because, as he often repeated, "they do not listen to" him. He connected this home culture experience to U.S. culture in his writing. He wrote about his trip to the pyramids:

> … And trips never go well. A delay, an injury, or someone obviously gets lost. Think of home alone [*Home Alone*], know when that kid accidently went to new york [New York]. When we were going to egypt [Egypt], the flight got delayed. When we were celebrating eid [Eid, holiday for Muslims], my sister got lost. See something happens to mess our trip up and make it a horrible day…. We rented a horse…. We went to KFC nearby (to think of it's weird to

have KFC near the pyramids but on horse it's faster) got our food, ate it, and left in half an hour. (See Figure 2)

Milo drew on the popular American film *Home Alone* to discuss how his younger sister got lost during a trip to Egypt. In this excerpt, he related his sister to the movie character. By equating the main character in *Home Alone* to a "kid," he positioned his younger sister as a kid who did not listen to him, and he positioned himself as an older brother who needed to care for his sister. He viewed himself as part of home culture as caretaker for his younger siblings and connected it to an American movie character. He used this metaphor in his memoir to convey that the trip did not go smoothly at first. His identity crossed over both contexts.

Another aspect of his cross-cultural identity is also evident when he connected his experiences in Egypt to those in the United States. For instance, he used KFC, a U.S.-based fast-food chain, to illustrate that it was interesting to see it near the pyramids. He said, "It's weird to have KFC near the pyramids." This demonstrates that he applied his U.S. cultural background to understand the context in Egypt. Milo saw the food chain through an American lens. It demonstrates that his identity is not limited to one culture but is cross-cultural and transnational.

In sum, the middle grades MLLs' cross-cultural identities are evident in their writing. Compared to their worksheet assignments, writing in contexts that allow them to include their voices, such as the memoir genre, enabled them to connect their home identities to cultural references in the United States. This provided greater space for them to represent who they are in a given context, demonstrating that their identities are relational and transitional rather than fixed.

Discussion

This research offers insights into middle grades MLLs' literacy practices and addresses the equitable learning experiences for MLLs who are often marginalized in English-speaking contexts. Over decades, many studies on MLLs in the U.S. context focused on Spanish-background students (e.g., Linares, 2024; Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Poza, 2019). The current study's findings on Arabic

Figure 5
Milo's Answering Questions Example

First, the findings from the current study suggest that middle grades students' writing is rooted in cross-culturally lived experiences. They align with other studies (Kang & Veitch, 2017; Linares, 2024; Skerret, 2013; Yi, 2013) on MLLs' writing, which find that MLLs' cultural identities are an important component in language and literacy development. Although research (de Oliveira, 2016; Ponzio, 2020) indicates that MLLs' primary language and culture play a significant role in their literacy development, the connection between these factors and MLLs' specific writing samples remains unclear. Both Aiden's and Milo's writing examples help teachers understand this connection. Compared to writing activities using worksheets, they actively participated and added more voice when their topic was connected to their primary culture. When the writing assignments focused on answering questions from the reading materials in worksheets (see Figure 5), which did not offer space to present their voice, their engagement was limited. Their lack of engagement in traditional academic writing prompts, such as longer essays and structured worksheets, aligns with previous research; when MLLs are provided opportunities to experiment with different writing styles, their language and literacy learning improves (Assaf, 2014; Kang & Veitch, 2017; Skerrett, 2013).

This finding supports Norton and McKinney's (2011) claim that MLLs negotiate and renegotiate a sense of self while engaging in language and literacy practices. As illustrated in the cases of Aiden and Milo, they connected their cultural experiences in the United States, including

and Vietnamese backgrounds contribute to the conversation in discussing diverse language and cultural backgrounds. The students in this study, who are considered "advanced" English learners, still strive to "master" English as shown in the writing samples. The uniqueness of their language and cultural backgrounds challenges the preconceived notion of MLLs as one homogenous group of students. Below, we discuss how the current data analysis confirms, refines, and expands the existing research on MLL's writing, providing implications for middle grades teachers with MLLs.

schooling, movies, and fast-food restaurants, to their experiences in their home countries, including family members such as their grandmother and aunt. Their writing demonstrates how they engage and (re)negotiate their identities in relation to the broader community. Middle grades MLLs view themselves as part of a home culture, and through writing, they have opportunities to (re)construct their identity as MLLs, connecting their home identity to a larger community. When students can explore their interests and connect to the global world, they will find purpose and perhaps excitement in writing (Gallagher, 2011). This study adds to that conversation.

Second, the study's findings suggest that the development of cross-cultural identities in middle grade students was not separate from their language and literacy learning. Middle grades teachers should consider that MLLs' cultural and social needs are inseparable from their academic needs. This argument aligns with Schaefer and her colleagues' (2016) claim that "core middle school practices must continue to grow and thrive in order to meet the social and academic needs of future generations of young adolescents" (p. 1). Although there are consistent English grammar and convention issues, the two middle grades MLLs' cross-cultural identities were present. By allowing Milo and Aiden to write about their personal histories as they relate to culture, they were more attentive in their work, writing more than for other assignments. Additionally, they bridged their American and Arabic (Milo) or Vietnamese (Aiden) cultures by incorporating examples from both cultures into their writing. Milo compared his Eid celebration to *Home Alone*, a Christmas movie, and Aiden used a panda to illustrate his grandmother's hugs. This study shows that the content matters for students' engagement in writing practices.

Third, the findings suggest that, regardless of middle grades MLLs' fluency in their primary language, it still influences their writing in English. Aiden's case illustrates that birth location, such as being born in the United States, does not determine mastery of English writing. In other words, it is overly simplistic to assume that native-born MLLs are inherently proficient in English. Aiden's and Milo's writing samples provide some evidence that their primary language influences their English writing. Yet, the areas that the two

students need to grow are different. Both boys transfer their knowledge of the primary language to their learning of English. The analysis shows that Milo often omits capital letters when writing in English because Arabic lacks them, while Aiden frequently omits plurals because Vietnamese does not use them.

This is a pattern of *language transfer* (Brown, 2014), in which their primary language knowledge is transferred to their learning of a second language. This is an intriguing finding. During the interviews, Aiden shared that he is not fluent and that he does not read and write well in Vietnamese. Yet, as noted earlier, his New York State testing results still categorized him as an "English language learner," and even though he demonstrated a strong grasp of English, he has not met New York State's requirements to remove that designation. Milo also shared that he feels more confident in English than in Arabic and communicates with his siblings in English. Although both boys favor and are more confident in English than their primary language, they still exhibit common language transfer techniques in their writing. Teachers can use this language transfer information to better accommodate the varied learners in the classroom.

Finally, the two middle grades students' cases demonstrate a need for awareness and monitoring of their use of language. As shown in Aiden's data, he demonstrates English grammar abilities based on the pattern of his English use: in one context, he used the correct form, *many things*, while in another context, he used the incorrect form, *many thing*. It illustrates that the issue is not related to his language ability but to his awareness of his language use. This finding provides insights into the importance of teachers knowing MLLs' primary languages. It might be overwhelming for teachers to learn all of MLLs' primary languages, but, as documented with Aiden and Milo, the consistent pattern in students' writing shows that understanding the principled elements of MLLs' primary languages supports the monitoring process. Middle school teachers could profoundly impact their students' English language learning by understanding the basic principles of their students' primary languages. By engaging in this effort, middle grades teachers will demonstrate that they value MLLs' linguistic and cultural differences as assets rather than deficits.

Specifically, middle grades teachers can work with MLLs on language transfer and help them eventually find or monitor it independently. For instance, students with an Arabic language background learning English tend to "talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points" (Alsamadani, 2010, cited in Rass, 2015, p. 49) because it is common in Arabic language and culture to talk around a topic and repeat points. Scholars from Arabic-language backgrounds (e.g., Alsamadani; Rass, 2015; Shakoori & Rubinstein-Avila, 2023) argue that this stylistic feature provides evidence of language transfer. With language transfer, middle grades MLLs need sufficient time to recognize the differences between two languages and to develop awareness of stylistic features and mistakes when applying primary language knowledge to a second language. In other words, middle grades MLLs' awareness of their language use, described by Krashen (1982) as a monitoring process, is critical. This process, situated in a metacognitive orientation, in which students think about their own thinking, will facilitate young adolescent MLLs' language and literacy learning.

Suggestions for Middle Grades Teachers and Future Research

The study's findings provide important suggestions for middle grades teachers who work with MLLs and offer insights for future research. First, middle grades teachers must understand MLLs' second language acquisition processes and apply that knowledge in their writing instruction. Writing improvement practices should not rest solely on ESL teachers; content area teachers should also provide equitable learning opportunities for MLLs in the mainstream English context (Yoon, 2023). Teachers' influence should not be taken for granted when working with MLLs. Middle grades teachers addressing the writing needs of MLLs can positively impact students' learning (Barone & Cargile, 2020; Min, 2016).

Next, middle grades teachers need to be aware of writing improvement strategies that benefit individual MLLs. As shown in the data, the needs of the two students differ. It is limiting to approach the writing of young adolescent MLLs with the same instructional method. Milo shared challenges with grammar and brainstorming ideas when writing longer essays, and he needs more scaffolded instruction in drafting, editing, rewriting, and brainstorming (Barone & Cargile, 2020; Peercy, 2011; Squire & Clark, 2020). Successful scaffolded instruction is possible when middle grades teachers understand the key linguistic tenets of MLLs' primary languages to promote students' monitoring process and successful language and literacy learning.

According to the NCES (2022), more than 400 languages are spoken by MLLs in U.S. public schools. Alongside Spanish and Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese are the most common primary languages among MLLs. Although scholars consistently claim that teachers need a stronger foundation in MLLs' primary languages (García, 2009; Villegas et al., 2018; Yoon & Pratt, 2023), it is unclear whether teachers have paid particular attention to this need. The findings of the current study promote the call for action. To provide equitable learning opportunities for MLLs, all teachers must understand the principled elements of MLLs' primary languages to better serve them. Engaging peers and teachers in their primary language and culture in schools can strengthen young adolescent MLLs' English writing and add valuable contributions to the classroom.

The findings of the current study provide suggestions for future research in the field of middle grades education. Middle grades MLLs' writing requires a complex cognitive and social process. Second language and literacy education is divided into cognitive and sociocultural perspectives (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Since new language and literacy learning is complex and requires many diverse perspectives, dividing the field into two perspectives is limiting. As shown in the cases of the two students, the study challenges this division. It suggests that future research from both perspectives is needed to better understand the complex language and literacy learning process of young adolescent MLLs. From a cognitive standpoint, it is important for MLLs to have ongoing opportunities to be aware of their language use in writing by comparing and contrasting their primary language to English. As the identity framework informs, which is situated in sociocultural domains, middle grade teachers need to consider MLLs' cultural identities to improve students' writing. Language, literacy, and cultural identities should be taught concurrently for meaningful instruction, rather than separately.

Additionally, more studies are needed that discuss young adolescent MLLs' language and literacy learning under the guidance of teachers who recognize the differences between MLLs' primary language and English. As shown in interview and observation data, Aiden and Milo struggled in certain writing areas, exhibiting errors in English that were influenced by their primary language. These observations underscore the importance of preparing teachers to understand how MLLs' primary languages shape their English learning. It is therefore prudent to include this focus in teacher education curricula to better support MLLs' writing development. Furthermore, more research in the field of middle grades education is needed on the connection between MLLs' primary language and English. Compared to students whose primary language is English, MLLs have a primary language that serves as a bridge to learning a second language. Although this study discusses only two students' cases in one classroom, which we consider a limitation, the findings shed light on the link between MLLs' primary language and English. In other words, Aiden's and Milo's writing show this connection; therefore, more studies on young adolescent MLLs' writing with diverse language backgrounds, including Spanish, Chinese, and Urdu, will be important to refine or expand the findings of the current study.

As noted earlier, few studies have examined adolescent MLLs' writing experiences in English-speaking classroom contexts. Although the reasons for this limited research base are unclear, the scarcity of studies reflects the extent to which this group remains marginalized within the U.S. educational landscape. Additional research is needed to capture the nuances of mainstream classroom dynamics and to inform equity-focused instruction. Findings from this study suggest that creating opportunities for MLLs to incorporate their cultural identities and voices in writing can enhance both engagement and language development. This work represents an initial step toward understanding young adolescent MLLs' writing in classroom settings and may guide future research aimed at supporting more equitable learning opportunities for this population.

Related Publications Statement

This manuscript is based on data from a larger qualitative study on teacher collaboration that was previously published as Yoon (2023). The present manuscript focuses specifically on multilingual learners' writing experiences and their linguistic and cultural identities, which were not addressed in the earlier publication. The detailed publication information is as follows:

Yoon, B. (2023). Classroom study of teacher collaboration for multilingual learners: Implications for teacher education programs. *Action in Teacher Education, 45*(2), 124-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2023.2175739

References

Alsamadani, H. A. (2010). The relationship between Saudi EFL students' writing competence, L1 writing proficiency, and self-regulation. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 16*(1), 53-63. https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=65541

Assaf, L. C. (2014). Supporting English language learners' writing abilities: Exploring third spaces. *Middle Grades Research Journal, 9*(1), 1-17. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268504672_Assaf_LC_2014_Supporting_English_language_learners'_writing_abilities_Exploring_third_spaces_The_Middle_Grades_Research_Journal_91_1-17

Barone, S. M., & Cargile, C. (2020). L1 and L2 writing differences: From understanding to practice. *English Teaching Forum, 58*(3), 10-19. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1274839.pdf

Bikowski, D., & Vithanage, R. (2016). Effects of web-based collaborative writing on individual L2 writing development. *Language Learning & Technology, 20*(1), 79-99. https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/44447

Brandon, H., & Hurd, E. (2024). Translanguaging in middle level education. *Current Issues in Middle Level Education, 25*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.20429/cimle.2024.28202

Brown, D. (2012). The written corrective feedback debate: Next steps for classroom teachers and practitioners. *TESOL Quarterly: A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and of Standard English as a Second Dialect, 46*(4), 861-867. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.63

Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Chapman T. K. (2007). Interrogating classroom relationships and events: Using portraiture and critical race theory in education research. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(3), 156-162. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07301437

Choi, T. H., & Wong, W. C. C. (2018). "Platform nine and three-quarters" and more: Scaffolding ESL writing through teacher modeling and creative imitation. *TESOL Journal, 9*(4), 1-23. http://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.423

Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: Global perspectives and local realities. *TESOL Quarterly, 48*(4), 738-762. http://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.148

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Cummins, J. (2008). Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education. In J. Cummins and N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 65-75). Springer.

Cummins, J., & Swain, M. (2014). *Bilingualism in education: Aspects of theory, research and practice*. Routledge.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2023). Investment and motivation in language learning: What's the difference? *Language Teaching, 56*, 29-40. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444821000057

David, V. (2016). A comparison of two approaches for assessing L2 writing: Process-based and impromptu timed writing exams. *Applied Language Learning, 26*(1), 65-82. https://www.dliflc.edu/ojs/ALL/issue/view/16/18

de Oliveira, L. C. (2016). A language-based approach to content instruction (LACI) for English language learners: Examples from two elementary teachers. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 10*(3), 217-231. https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2016.1185911

Doolan, S. M., & Fitzsimmons-Doolan, S. (2016). Facilitating L2 writers' interpretation of source texts. *TESOL Journal, 7*(3), 716-745. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.239

Eckstein, G., & Ferris, D. (2018). Comparing L1 and L2 texts and writers in first-year composition. *TESOL Quarterly, 52*(1), 137-162. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.376

Fernandez, R., Peyton, J. K., & Schaetzel, K. (2017). A survey of writing instruction in adult ESL programs: Are teaching practices meeting adult learner needs? *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education, 6*(2), 5-20.

Gallagher, K. (2011). *Write like this: Teaching real-world writing through modeling & mentor texts*. Stenhouse Publishers.

García, O. (2009). Education, multilingualism and translanguaging in the 21st century. In A Mohanty, M. Panda, R. Phillipson, and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds), *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local* (pp. 140-158). Orient Blackswan.

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In S. Hall and P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1-17). Sage.

Hamman-Ortirez, L. (2019). Troubling the "two" in two-way bilingual education. *Bilingual Research Journal, 42*(4), 387-407. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2019.1686441

Harré, R., & van Langenhove, L. (Eds.). (1999). *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action*. Blackwell Publishers.

Hartshorn, K. J., Evans, N. W., Merrill, P. F., Sudweeks, R. R., Strong-Krause, D., & Anderson, N. J. (2010). Effects of dynamic corrective feedback on ESL writing accuracy. *TESOL Quarterly, 44*(1), 84-109. https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2010.213781

Hodges, T. S. (2017). Theoretically speaking: An examination of four theories and how they support writing in the classroom. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas for Middle and High School Teachers, 90*(4), 139-146. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2017.1326228

Hughes, J., & Morrison, L. (2014). The impact of social networking and a multiliteracies pedagogy on English language learners' writer identities. *Writing & Pedagogy, 6*(3), 607-631. http://doi.org/10.1558/wap.v6i3.607

Ishaq, K., Rosdi, F., Zin, N.A.M., & Abid, A. (2022). Serious game design model for language learning in the cultural context. *Education and Information Technologies, 27*, 9317-9355. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-10999-5

Jwa, S. (2018). Negotiating voice construction between writers and readers in college writing: A case study of an L2 writer. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *17*(1), 34-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1401928

Kang, H. S., & Veitch, H. (2017). Mainstream teacher candidates' perspectives on ESL writing: The effects of writer identity and rater background. *TESOL Quarterly*, *51*(2), 249-274. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.289

Kibler, A. (2010). Writing through two languages: First language expertise in a language minority classroom. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *19*(3), 121-142. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2010.04.001

Kibler, A. K., Karam, F. J., Ehrlich, V. A. F., Bergey, R., Wang, C., & Elreda, L. M. (2018). Who are "Long-term English Learners"? Using classroom interactions to deconstruct a manufactured learner label. *Applied Linguistics, 39*(5), 741-765. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw039

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon.

Kurihara, N. (2017). Do peer reviews help improve student writing abilities in an EFL high school classroom? *TESOL Journal*, *8*(2), 450-470. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.282

Kurzer, K. (2018). Dynamic written corrective feedback in developmental multilingual writing classes. *TESOL Quarterly. 52*(1), 5-33. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.366

Lam, W. S. E. (2014). Literacy and capital in immigrant youths' online networks across countries. *Learning, Media and Technology, 39*(4), 488-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2014.942665

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned*. Oxford University Press.

Lin, S. M. (2015). A study of ELL students' writing difficulties: A call for culturally, linguistically, and psychologically responsive teaching. *College Student Journal*, *49*(2), 237-250.

Linares, R. E. (2024). "Para Que Los Demás Se Diviertan Un Poco": Negotiating social interactions in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 23*(2), 228-242. http://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2021.1986398

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Maliborska, V., & You, Y. (2016). Writing conferences in a second language writing classroom: Instructor and student perspectives. *TESOL Journal, 7*(4), 874-897. http://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.249

Martin-Beltrán, M. (2014). "What do you want to say?" How adolescents use translanguaging to expand learning opportunities. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 8*(3), 208-230. https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2014.914372

Mason, K. (2006). Cooperative learning and second language acquisition in first-year composition: Opportunities for authentic communication among English language learners. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, *34*(1), 52-58.

McVee, M. B., Silvestri, K. N., Barrett, N., & Haq, K. S. (2019). *Positioning theory*. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, M. Sailors, and R. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of literacy* (pp. 381-400). Routledge.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed). Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Miller, A. E., & Stentz, Z. (2012). *Colin Fischer*. Penguin.

Min, Y. K. (2016). Rethinking ESL service courses for international graduate students. *TESOL Journal*, *7*(1), 162-178. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.195

Moje, E., & Luke, A. (2009). Literacy and identity: Examining the metaphors in history and contemporary research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *44*(4), 415-437. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.44.4.7

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2022). *English learners in public schools*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf/english-learners

New York State Department of Education. (2023). *New York State English as a second language achievement test (NYSESLAT)*. https://www.nysed.gov/state-assessment/new-york-state-english-second-language-achievement-test-nyseslat

New York State Department of Education. (2024). *NYSESLAT parent information brochure.* https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/bilingual-ed/nyseslatparentinfobrochure-english.pdf

Nguyen, H. T., Huy Phung, H., & Hoan Nguyen, H. (2023). An overview of Vietnamese for teachers of English language learners. In B. Yoon and K. L. Pratt (Eds.), *Primary language impact on second language and literacy learning: Linguistically responsive strategies for teachers* (pp. 97-112). Lexington.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Pearson Education.

Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending conversation* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Norton, B., & McKinney, C. (2011). An identity approach to second language acquisition. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 73-94). Routledge.

Ortmeier-Hooper, C. (2017). *Writing across culture and language: Inclusive strategies for working with ELL writers in the ELA classroom.* National Council of Teachers of English.

Ostrow, J., & Ning Chang, L. C. (2012). I'm a poet? International doctoral students at a U.S. university participate in a creative writing workshop. *TESOL Journal, 3*(1), 48-64. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.3

Pacheco, M. B., Kang, H-S., Hurd, E. (2019). Scaffolds, signs, and bridges: Language ideologies and translanguaging in student teaching experiences. *Bilingual Research Journal, 42*(3), 255-271. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2019.1654156

Peercy, M. M. (2011). Preparing English language learners for the mainstream: Academic language and literacy practices in two junior high school ESL classrooms. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 27*(4), 324-362. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2011.596105

Ponzio, C. M. (2020). (Re)Imagining a translingual self: Shifting one monolingual teacher candidate's language lens. *Linguistics and Education, 60,* 1-11. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100866

Poza, L. E. (2019). "Los dos son mi idioma": Translanguaging, identity, and social relationships among bilingual youth. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 18*(2), 92-109. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2018.1504682

Pratt-Johnson, Y., & Bhattacharyya, M. (2023). First language impact. In B. Yoon and K. L. Pratt (Eds.), *Primary language impact on second language and literacy learning: Linguistically responsive strategies for teachers* (pp. 113-130). Lexington.

Rass, R. A. (2015). Challenges face Arab students in writing well-developed paragraphs in English. *English Language Teaching, 8*(10), 49-59. http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n10p49

Schaefer, M. B., Malu, K. F., & Yoon, B. (2016). An historical overview of the middle school movement, 1963-2015. *RMLE Online, 39*(5), 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2016.1165036

Shakoori, A. M. M., & Rubinstein-Avila, E. (2023). Arabic language's impact on English language learners' literacy development: Implications for educators. In B. Yoon and K. L. Pratt (Eds.), *Primary language impact on second language and literacy learning: Linguistically responsive strategies for classroom teachers* (pp. 131-146). Lexington.

Skerrett, A. (2013). Building multiliterate and multilingual writing practices and identities. *English Education, 45*(4), 322-360. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24570979

Song, K., & Kiaer, J. (2023). Korean students' first language impact on English language and literacy learning. In B. Yoon and K. L. Pratt (Eds.), *Primary language impact on second language and literacy learning: Linguistically responsive strategies for classroom teachers* (pp. 45-61). Lexington.

Squire, A., & Clark, S. K. (2020). Exploring how fourth-grade emerging bilinguals learn to write opinion essays. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 59*(1), 53-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2019.1686093

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis.* The Guilford Press.

Suvin, S. (2020). Complexities of writing skill at the secondary level in Bangladesh education system: A quantitative case study analysis. *English Language Teaching, 13*(12), 65-75. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n12p65

Uliassi, C. (2019). *Teachers' critical practices for English language learners' literacy and empowerment: A collective case study* (Doctoral dissertation, Binghamton University) [Publication No. 27546743]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/teachers-critical-practices-english-language/docview/2352052679/se-2

Villegas, A. M., SaizdeLaMora, K., Martin, A. D., & Mills, T. (2018). Preparing future mainstream teachers to teach English Language Learners: A review of the empirical literature. *The Educational Forum, 82*(2), 138-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2018.1420850

Walker, A., Yoon, B., & Pankowski, J. (2024). Advancing middle grade research on critical pedagogy: Research synthesis. *Education Sciences, 14*(9), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14090997

Wilson, J., Palermo, C., Wibowo, A., Zhang, F., & Nusrat, A. (2025). Writing growth among non-English learners and English learners in grades 6-8 using automated writing evaluation. *Reading and Writing*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-025-10700-5

Wolf, M. K., & Oh, S. (2024). Investigating the types and use of feedback in middle-school English language learners' academic writing. *Language Learning & Technology, 28*(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/73583

Woodrich, M., & Fan, Y. (2017). Google docs as a tool for collaborative writing in the middle school classroom. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research, 16*, 391-410. https://doi.org/10.28945/3870

Wyse, D. (2018). Choice, voice and process - teaching writing in the 21st century: Revisiting the influence of Donald Graves and the process approach to writing. *English in Australia, 53*(3), 82-91.

Yazan, B. (2018). A conceptual framework to understand language teacher identities. *Journal of Second Language Teacher Education, 1*(1), 21-48. https://doi.org/10.1558/slte.24908

Yi, Y. (2013). Adolescent multilingual writer's negotiation of multiple identities and access to academic writing: A case study of a Jogi Yuhak student in a US high school. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 69*(2), 207-231. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.1381

Yoon, B. (2007). Offering or limiting opportunities: Teachers' roles and approaches to English language learners' participation in literacy activities. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(3), 216-225. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.61.3.2

Yoon, B. (2012). Junsuk and Junhyuck: Adolescent immigrants' educational journey to success and identity negotiation. *American Educational Research Journal, 49*(5), 971-1002. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.3102/0002831212443694

Yoon, B. (2021). English language learners' language and literacy development: A brief synopsis of theoretical orientations for middle school teachers. *Middle School Journal, 52*(1), 23-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2020.1840270

Yoon, B. (2023). Classroom study of teacher collaboration for multilingual learners: Implications for teacher education programs. *Action in Teacher Education, 45*(2), 124-141. http://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2023.2175739

Yoon, B., & Pratt, K. L. (Eds.) (2023). *Primary language impact on second language and literacy learning: Linguistically responsive strategies for classroom teachers*. Lexington.

Yusuf, Q., Jusoh, Z., & Yusuf, Y. Q. (2019). Cooperative learning strategies to enhance writing skills among second language learners. *International Journal of Instruction, 12*(1), 1399-1412. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12189a

Zuengler, J., & Miller, E. R. (2006). Cognitive and sociocultural perspectives: Two parallel SLA worlds? *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(1), 35-58. https://doi.org/10.2307/40264510