

Translanguaging And Transnational Inquiry In The IB Primary Years Programme: Bridging Inequalities And Fostering Intercultural Empathy In A Binational U.S. Colombia Experience

**Maríel Evelyn Castellanos Adarme¹, Luis Eduardo Muñoz
Guerrero², Efrén A. Báez Conde³**

*¹Universidad de Investigación e Innovación de México (UIIX), Morelos, México,
mcastellanos@comunidad.uiix.edu.mx*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8662-6415>

*²Facultad de Ingenierías, Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, Pereira, Risaralda,
Colombia, lemunozg@utp.edu.co*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9414-6187>

*³Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC), Tunja, Boyacá,
Colombia, efren.baez@uptc.edu.co*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3942-8912>

Abstract

In today's world more connected than ever, yet marked by deep inequalities primary education bears a real responsibility to help children grow into critical thinkers who speak multiple languages and act with genuine ethical concern for others. This participatory action research examined a transnational collaboration in 2025 between one International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) schools: one charter school in Norman, Oklahoma (USA) and one public school in Ocaña, Norte de Santander (Colombia). Over six weeks, 35 fifth-grade students (26 in the United States and 9 in Colombia) explored the transdisciplinary unit "Where We Are in Place and Time." The project stood out for its integration of inquiry, everyday bilingualism (through extensive natural translanguaging), and concepts of global citizenship.

Evidence was gathered through classroom observation, student portfolios, CER rubrics to assess argumentative quality, pre- and post-project surveys, and a live international "mirror class" via Zoom that emerged as a key highlight. The results were clear and encouraging: students generated 68 authentic questions and demonstrated clear progress in argumentation (CER rubric average reached 4.2 out of 5); translanguaging was used freely not only to explain academic ideas but also to express surprise or excitement; and intercultural empathy increased noticeably, with 91% agreeing "we are different, but equal" and 89% reporting they truly felt connected to peers in the other country.

This work contributes meaningfully to the field: it extends García's (2014) ideas on translanguaging by applying them to transnational inquiry within the PYP context, and it provides a practical, replicable model capable of bridging significant resource and access disparities between schools in the Global North and South. Above all, the findings highlight that even a regular primary classroom can become a space for ethical, multilingual learning

where children develop their own voice, think critically, and begin to feel part of something much larger. This reflects precisely the kind of education that Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 and the IB philosophy advocate.

Keywords: transdisciplinary inquiry, translanguaging, academic bilingualism, global citizenship, Primary Years Programme (PYP), human development, intercultural education, mirror class, participatory action research.

Introduction

The world is really connected these days. People and ideas and problems are all moving across countries. At the same time the world is very divided and unfair. The world has never been like this before. There are a lot of problems with society, the climate is in trouble, and people from different cultures are not getting along. All of these things are causing a lot of trouble. Primary education cannot just teach students some facts and expect everything to be okay. Primary education has to do more than that. It needs to teach kids to think and make good decisions. They should be able to speak languages easily and want to do the right thing to help the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO said this back in 2015 and also in that report from 1996 by Delors.

Education is very important for the future. It should help kids become global citizens, appreciate different cultures, and live in a way that is good for the earth. This is what the United Nations said in 2015 in something called Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. When thinking about it in terms of how people grow and learn, like Nussbaum and Sen do, it becomes obvious. Real flourishing means people have the freedom to think for themselves, participate, and live a decent life. The freedom to think and live like this has to begin when people are young. This means classrooms should let kids make their own decisions, ask a lot of questions, and care about people who are different from them. Nussbaum and Sen show that people need these freedoms to really flourish.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme is what really helps here. It does something that is very solid and on purpose. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme does not keep learning stuck in boxes for each subject like most traditional schools do. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme builds everything around six themes that are not just about one subject. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme keeps looking into things, listening to what the students have to say, and taking action at the center of everything according to the International Baccalaureate Organization in the year 2020. The roots of this way of learning go back to what Dewey said in 1938 about hands-on learning and what Freire said in 1968 about critical pedagogy. They wanted the classroom to be like a democratic space where children can ask honest questions and work together to understand the world. Children should be able to think about problems and learn from them. The International Baccalaureate programme is getting bigger quickly. By October 2025 there were already more than 8,700 Primary Years Programme in over 6,000 schools across more than 160 countries. This means that 2 million kids are taking part in the Primary Years Programme. Some people did a study where they followed students for a time. They compared these students to students who were not doing the Primary Years Programme. The study found that the students who were doing the Primary Years Programme were really good at asking questions and finding answers. They were also very good at understanding how other people feel. The Primary Years Programme students had a view of the world and were more open to different cultures. For example some researchers like Bores-García and others did a study in 2023 that showed this. The International Baccalaureate also did some research on this in 2018 on students who spoke two languages and were doing the Primary Years Programme. Honestly there are still big gaps in the Primary Years Programme research. Most Primary Years Programme studies only look at what happens in one school. This school is often a really good one with a lot of resources, like an international school. They also tend to focus on one thing like how students learn through asking questions or how they learn in two languages, which is

called bilingual teaching as seen in the work of Bores-García and other people in 2023. There are not many who try to cross the real gaps between different socioeconomic groups and practical issues through partnerships between countries, especially not ones that combine learning, being able to speak two languages in a real way, and being a global citizen right into the classrooms where young kids learn. The idea of bilingualism is important here. It is like what García talked about in 2014, where people use all the languages they know to communicate. Global citizenship and bilingualism are things that are often missing from classrooms. They are very important for kids to learn.

Cummins idea from 2000 about the difference between the language used every day and the language used for school is still very important. However there are not good examples of how using languages together which is called translanguaging really helps students talk about academic things and understand people from different cultures. This is especially true for projects that focus on asking questions and working with people from countries like the ones done in the Primary Years Program. Cummins idea is still relevant. There is a need to see more examples of how translanguaging helps with academic talk and cross-cultural understanding in these kinds of projects like the Primary Years Program projects. People always talk about citizenship education and how it is important to be kind and help each other. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization said this in 2015.

What is not known is how kids in different parts of the world like a special school in the United States and a regular school in Latin America learn to make good choices when they meet people from other cultures. Global citizenship education is important. It can help kids build real ethical agency from direct contact with people from other cultures like kids in a charter school in the U.S. and kids in a public school in Latin America. There is a need to know more about how global citizenship education helps kids in places.

This article discusses a project conducted in 2025. It was a kind of research project where people actually did things together. Two schools that teach the PYP program were connected. One school was a charter school in Norman, Oklahoma in the United States of America. The other school was a school in Ocaña, Norte de Santander in Colombia.

For six weeks 35 fifth grade students took part in this project. There were 26 students from Norman and 9 students from Ocaña. They all worked on a unit called "Where We Are in Place and Time." This unit was about lots of subjects all mixed together. The PYP program and the project were really interesting. The students from the two PYP schools learned a lot from each other. Three things that are connected were put together. The first thing is looking at patterns in the world around us like nature, people and history. The second thing is using two languages, English and Spanish in daily life to help make good arguments and understand each other better. The third thing is being a citizen of the world by being kind and thinking about how others feel. A lot of activities were done. Time capsules were made that were for the students themselves. The sky was looked at. Numbers from the school were used to learn things. Books were read to learn about history. Thoughts and ideas were shared with each other in both English and Spanish. At the end there was a class with kids from another country where how students think about things was shown. It was called "Personal Lenses of Analysis". It was really cool because it was found out that a lot in common exists with people from places. It was seen that people are people no matter where they are from and that is a great thing.

The main thing wanted to be found out was: how much can a special project that combines kids from countries and languages really help fifth graders think critically, talk about school work in two languages, and understand people from different cultures when the schools are very different in terms of money and everyday life. The project mixed kids speaking languages and working together with people from different cultures. The project was an experiment to see if kids from different schools could work together and learn from each other.

The specific goals were straightforward:

- Activities need to be created that bring subjects together so students can understand the ways of people, the natural world and history in their own community and in other places too like other countries or cities that are far away from where they live.
- Students should really be encouraged to use language from subjects in school like math and history so they can compare things, discuss ideas, and have conversations with people from

other cultures using bilingual academic language to talk across cultures and bilingual academic language to compare worlds.

- People need to be helped to become global citizens by working together in groups, thinking about what is right and wrong, and understanding that having people from different backgrounds is a good thing. This will help grow as empathetic global citizens who see diversity as a strength.

This work adds value in a couple of ways: on the theory side, it stretches García's (2014) translanguaging concepts into transnational PYP inquiry, and on the practical side, it gives a model other teachers can tweak to link up unequal settings in primary global citizenship education. The rest of the article walks through the theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions, pointing out what this could mean for doing PYP in all kinds of diverse places.

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study comes from four linked ideas that work really well together: inquiry-based learning, bilingualism and translanguaging, global citizenship education, and human development through capabilities. They all come together naturally in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP), where the focus is on transdisciplinary inquiry, giving students real voice, and turning learning into meaningful action (IBO, 2020).

Inquiry is never just a method; it is a whole mindset about how knowledge is acquired and life is approached. Dewey (1938) believed true learning happens when children engage directly with experience and then reflect on it, making the classroom function as a real lab for trying ideas and interacting with the world. Freire (1968) pushed that further: knowing and changing things cannot be separated. For Freire, inquiry turns into something political it allows students to "read" the world, identify where things are unfair, and take action to address it. The PYP takes those big ideas and makes them doable: it builds units around real, student-generated questions and things that can be observed or touched every day (IBO, 2009; 2020). Recent studies on the PYP support this research shows inquiry really strengthens critical thinking, deeper conceptual grasp, and well-rounded growth (Bores-García et al., 2023; Dix & Sniedze, 2020). Long-term tracking also suggests PYP students tend to outperform others in inquiry, empathy, and global awareness (for example, in those ACER-IB collaborations, e.g., Dix & Sniedze, 2020).

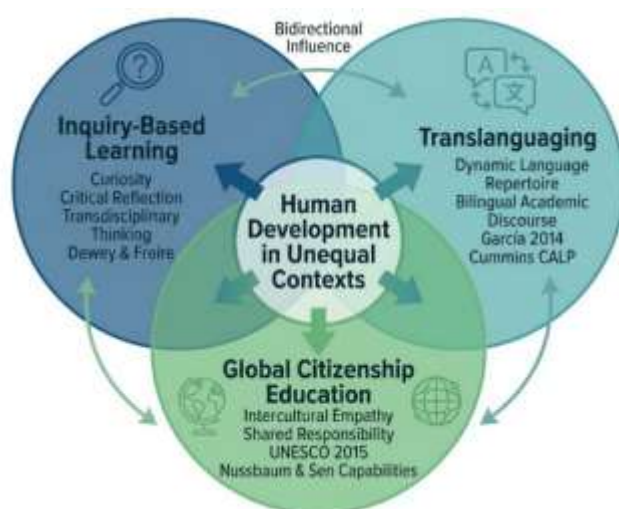
Bilingualism and translanguaging go beyond just teaching two languages in parallel. It is about turning language into a powerful tool for thinking and identity across different systems. Cummins (2000) drew a sharp line between everyday conversational skills (BICS) and the more academic language needed for school work (CALP). Building CALP in two languages sharpens metalinguistic awareness, helps with abstract thinking, and makes transferring ideas easier super helpful in diverse classrooms. But if one language takes over, children risk losing pieces of who they are. García (2014) brought in translanguaging as something much more fluid: bilingual people naturally pull from their full language repertoire without strict boundaries, challenging old "one language at a time" rules and opening up space for richer, more complex thinking. In IB settings, this kind of flexible language use really fuels inquiry by letting children express academic ideas more naturally (Huckle, 2021; some recent examples in bilingual PYP classrooms). Emerging evidence shows translanguaging strategies help new bilingual learners dive deeper into content and feel more included (Yun et al., 2025).

Global citizenship education is not about memorizing civic facts; it is about shaping attitudes, values, and skills so people can act responsibly in a connected but unequal world (UNESCO, 2015). It means empathy, respect across cultures, and a feeling of shared responsibility. That lines up perfectly with Nussbaum and Sen's (2000) capabilities approach: education should expand real freedoms to reason, participate, and live with dignity. The PYP weaves this in through "authentic action" that grows out of inquiry small gestures, decisions, or ideas for change (IBO, 2020). Studies keep showing the PYP helps develop international-mindedness, intercultural understanding, and empathy (Dix & Sniedze, 2020; Bores-García et al., 2023).

Human development, as Nussbaum and Sen (2000) describe it, is all about enlarging the real freedoms people have like reasoning freely and connecting with others. In primary school, that translates to creating spaces where curiosity, personal voice, critical awareness, and ethical choices can thrive (the Delors Report from UNESCO in 1996 outlined those four pillars: learning to know, do, live together, and be). The PYP brings these together through its themes, inquiry focus, and community connections, supporting more holistic growth (IBO, 2025 facts show over 8,700 programmes worldwide now).

What really stands out is how the PYP pulls all this together so well: inquiry drives exploration across subjects, translanguaging opens up meaning across languages, global citizenship appears in empathetic actions, and human development grows from real agency in different settings (IBO, 2020). But the research still has clear gaps. There are not many transnational PYP studies that seriously bridge socioeconomic divides (think U.S. charter schools versus public schools in Latin America), limited hard data on translanguaging in inquiry-driven binational work, and too few accounts of how intercultural empathy actually builds in unequal places (Bores-García et al., 2023). This study aims to explore exactly that: how a transnational PYP experience weaves these elements to boost critical thinking, bilingual discourse, and empathy for fifth-graders in contrasting contexts.

Figure 1. Conceptual diagram illustrating the integration of inquiry based learning, translanguaging, and global citizenship education as interconnected pillars supporting human development in unequal socioeconomic and logistical contexts



Methodology

This project used a participatory action research (PAR) approach, which is basically a repeating cycle of planning, doing, watching, and thinking about what happened all aimed at changing teaching practices together, right in the real context (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). PAR feels like a perfect fit for PYP classrooms because the programme already centers on student agency, inquiry, and action that actually matters (IBO, 2020). By pulling in teachers, students, and even families (at least indirectly) for planning, carrying out activities, observing what happened, and reflecting together, the whole thing echoed Freire's (1968) idea of education as dialogue that transforms people and situations.

1) Research Design and Context

The study leaned mostly qualitative but mixed in some numbers, staying interpretive and following the PAR spiral: plan–act–observe–reflect. That cycle was repeated over six weeks (September to October 2025), working inside the PYP transdisciplinary unit “Where We Are in Place and Time.” Two PYP schools joined in:

- A charter public school in Norman, Oklahoma (USA): 26 fifth-graders who had good access to digital tools and could work more independently.
- A public PYP school in Ocaña, Norte de Santander (Colombia): 9 fifth-graders where more structured support was needed because of limited tech and connectivity mostly printed materials and close teacher guidance.

In total, 35 students aged 10–11, plus two main teachers (the lead investigator from Norman and the co-facilitators in Ocaña). The binational setup was intentional the aim was to explore how intercultural learning happens when schools come from very different socioeconomic and practical realities.

2) Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Several methods were used at once to make sure the findings felt solid and real (triangulation):

1. Participant observation teachers' field notes capturing how kids interacted, used language, got engaged, and what attitudes showed up during activities.
2. Portfolios (some digital, some paper): weekly work like time capsules, shadow graphs, school data charts, historical timelines, One-Pagers, and “Personal Lenses of Analysis.”
3. CER rubrics (Claim–Evidence–Reasoning) to score how well students argued in bilingual presentations (1–5 scale).
4. Pre- and post-project surveys (Likert scales plus open questions) to track changes in how kids saw identity, diversity, bilingual confidence, and global citizenship like “I feel connected to children in other countries.”
5. The “Mi Lente de Análisis Personal” guide a simple structured tool for local observations and comparing across cultures (traffic, routines, sky, celebrations, etc.).
6. Video recordings of the mirror class capturing the live Zoom session for communication, translanguaging moments, and how mediation worked.
7. Student self-reflections at the end short metacognitive entries on what was learned and how the intercultural part felt.

Data collection was not one-and-done; adjustments were made every week based on feedback (for example, simplifying tasks in Ocaña when connectivity was spotty).

3) Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from both schools' administrations first. Students and parents/guardians gave informed assent/consent in English and Spanish everything was voluntary. Anonymity was protected with pseudonyms and data were kept secure. Special care went into power dynamics between the two countries and emotional safety during the intercultural parts (debriefing occurred after the mirror class, for example). The principal investigator, a bilingual teacher-researcher based in the U.S., maintained a research journal to stay aware of position and biases.

4) Data Analysis

Analysis happened in two connected ways:

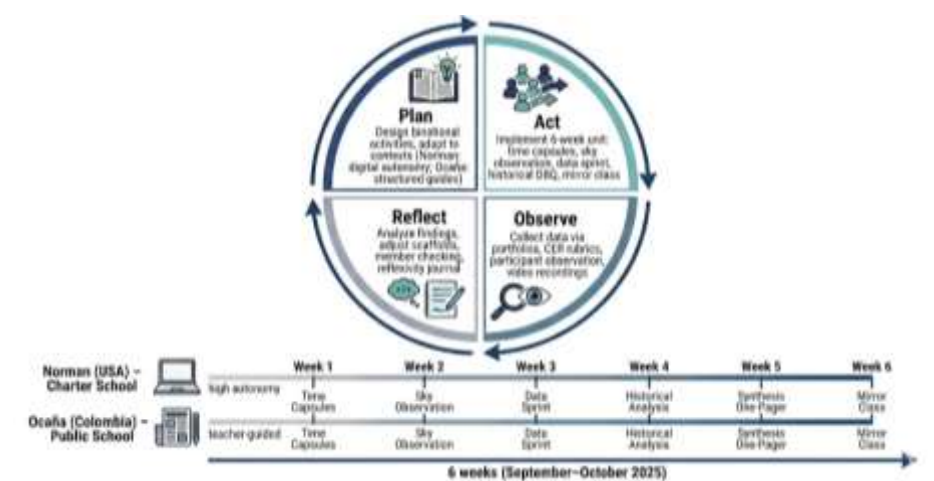
- a) Qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): open coding of portfolios, reflections, notes, and video transcripts began to spot emerging patterns (like question types, translanguaging examples, empathy moments). Then axial coding grouped them into bigger categories (critical thinking, intercultural awareness, ethical reflection). A colleague cross-checked a subsample for inter-coder agreement (over 80%).
- b) Basic quantitative descriptive stats: means and trends from rubrics, percentages and pre-post shifts from surveys, frequency counts (e.g., 68 authentic questions total, 100% bilingual oral participation in the mirror class).

The two sides were brought together by using qualitative details to explain the numbers (for instance, linking high empathy scores to specific moments in the mirror class). Credibility came from member checking (students reviewed main findings), thick descriptions, and prolonged engagement.

5) Limitations

The sample was not balanced (26 vs. 9 students), and the contexts differed a lot in tech access and support, so results are not generalizable everywhere but that actually strengthens ecological validity for real unequal settings. Language barriers were handled with translanguaging and visuals. In future work, bigger and more even groups or follow-up over time would help. All in all, this setup captured both the process and the outcomes of the transnational PYP experience reliably, giving trustworthy evidence about its effects on inquiry, bilingualism, and global citizenship.

Figure 2. Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycle adapted to the six week transnational PYP project, illustrating the iterative process (Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect) with parallel implementation in Norman (USA) and Ocaña (Colombia) contexts.



Results

The findings are organized by the three core axes of the project: inquiry based learning, bilingual academic discourse (including translanguaging), and global citizenship/intercultural empathy. Quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated across portfolios, rubrics, surveys, observations, and mirror class video analysis.

1. Inquiry Based Learning: Authentic Questions and Transdisciplinary Thinking Over the six weeks, students generated a total of 68 authentic questions emerging from classroom activities (Week 1: personal time capsules; Week 2: shadow observations; Week 3: school “data sprint”; Week 4: triangular trade mini DBQ; Week 5: synthesis One Pager).

Table 1 categorizes these questions by type and complexity (emergent from thematic coding):

Table 1. Categories of Authentic Questions Generated (N = 68)

Category	Examples	Frequency	Percentage
Natural phenomena	“Why does the sun look stronger in Ocaña than in Norman?”	18	26.5%
Social norms & community	“What would happen if we had no rules at school?”	22	32.4%
Historical & ethical	“How did slavery affect children 300 years ago?”	15	22.1%
Cultural & comparative	“Why do we eat corn in such different ways if we are far apart?”	13	19.1%

CER rubric scores (1–5 scale) showed progressive improvement in argumentative quality: average increased from 2.8 (Week 3) to 4.2 (Week 5), with strong use of evidence from observations and sources.

2. Bilingual Academic Discourse and Translanguaging Bilingual participation was consistent and functional. In the mirror class, 100% of students (35/35) presented their “Personal Lenses of Analysis” in English (with visual supports), and engaged in bilingual table construction. Translanguaging instances were frequent and strategic (García, 2014), as evidenced in video transcripts and portfolios:

- “In Ocaña we eat arepas, but in Norman we eat corn too it’s like a pattern.”
- “My graph shows that the shadow is más larga por la mañana and short in the afternoon.”
- “We are far, but we do similar things. That’s cool!” (emotional expression mixing languages for emphasis).

Pre post surveys indicated growth in bilingual confidence: 82% of students reported feeling “more comfortable using English and Spanish together to explain ideas” (up from 41% pre project).

3. Global Citizenship and Intercultural Empathy The mirror class (Week 6) served as the pivotal moment for empathy development. Students collaboratively built a bilingual comparative table across lenses (e.g., daily routines, sky observations, celebrations, housing).

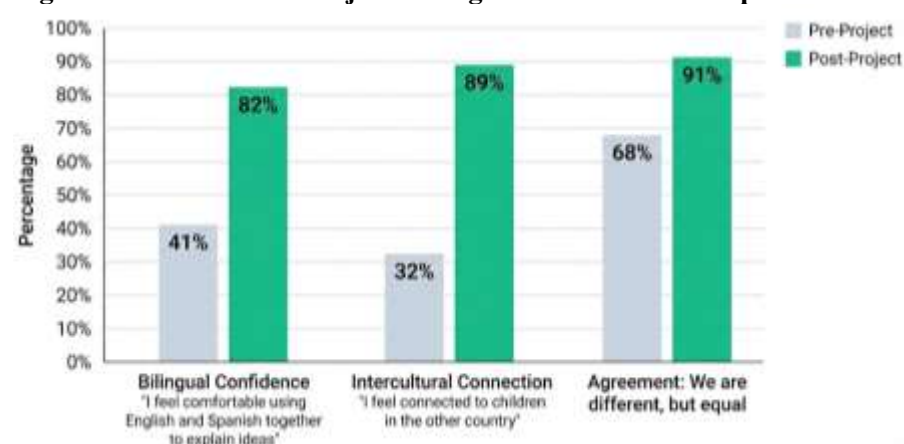
Post project survey results (Likert 1–5 scale):

- 91% agreed/strongly agreed with “We are different, but equal” ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.6$).
- 89% reported feeling “connected to children in the other country” ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 0.7$).
- Pre post shift: agreement with “People from other countries are very different from me” decreased from 68% to 14%.

Qualitative reflections highlighted emergent ethical awareness:

- “Before, many people were slaves. Today, we all have rights. But there is still inequality in some countries.” (historical connection).
- “We have snow days here, but they have rain every day but we both love playing games!” (shared humanity).

Figure 3: Pre and Post Project Changes in Students' Perceptions



4. Integrative products and overall patterns the final one pager (“Map of Life and Sky”) synthesized inquiry, bilingualism, and citizenship: students integrated visual data (graphs, timelines, drawings) with bilingual captions and ethical reflections. Video analysis of the mirror class showed high levels of turn taking, active listening, and spontaneous empathy expressions (e.g., “That’s like my life too!”).

Summary of Key Quantitative Indicators

Table 2. Summary of Key Outcomes

Dimension	Key Indicator	Value/Change
Inquiry	Authentic questions generated	68 total
Inquiry	CER rubric average (Week 5)	4.2 / 5

Bilingualism	Oral participation in mirror class (bilingual)	100%
Bilingualism	Pre post increase in bilingual confidence	+41%
Citizenship/Empathy	Agreement “We are different, but equal”	91% (post)
Intercultural Connection	Feeling “connected” to international peers	89%

These results provide empirical support for the project's impact across the targeted dimensions, with patterns emerging from both quantitative trends and rich qualitative evidence.

Discussion

The results from this research are really clear: when a PYP experience is designed to combine inquiry-based learning, functional bilingualism/translanguaging, and global citizenship, fifth-graders from different backgrounds can really improve in critical thinking, academic language use, and understanding people from other cultures. The PYP experience helps fifth-graders grow in thinking, academic language use, and intercultural empathy, which is a pretty big deal. Looking at the results, the PYP experience builds on what is known and makes it a little better in a few important ways.

First, children came up with 68 questions and their CER rubric scores went up from 2.8 to 4.2. This aligns with what Dewey said in 1938 about hands-on learning and what Freire said in 1968 about being critical. The children started by noticing things like shadows and what they do every day at school. Then they began to think about issues like slavery and inequality. It was like they were starting to think about the world and how it works. The CER rubric scores and the questions from the children showed that asking questions can change the way things are seen. The children were not just listening anymore; they were asking questions and thinking about the answers. The Primary Years Programme work that has been done recently shows that students are getting better at asking questions and understanding ideas when they work on projects that combine many subjects. It was surprising to see that this worked really well even when things were not perfect. For example, the students in Ocaña did not have a lot of technology and had to follow strict guides, but they were still able to come up with complex questions. The same thing happened with the students in Norman, who had freedom to use digital tools. What this shows is that technology is not needed to help students think deeply about the Primary Years Programme. What really makes a difference is giving them support and guidance. The Primary Years Programme is what is important here. It seems that good scaffolding is more important than fancy tools for the Primary Years Programme.

Second, the way that translanguaging appears in every place is really something. Languages are mixed all the time to be accurate and to express feelings. For example, “más larga por la mañana” and then “That’s cool.” This really supports what García said in 2014. García said that translanguaging is a tool for people to use when they are trying to figure something out. It helps them think and feel. Children use all of the languages they know to build their arguments, to move ideas from one language to another, and to show that they care about others. This is what Cummins talked about in 2000. Cummins said that people can grow and learn when they use all of their languages and that translanguaging does not have to make them lose their languages. Translanguaging is a tool for children to use when they are trying to learn and understand things. Translanguaging helps children to use their full language repertoires to express themselves in a better way. Earlier International Baccalaureate bilingual studies usually focus on program models like the fact that thirty percent of Primary Years Programme schools have programs, especially in Latin America. The American Councils and International Baccalaureate Organization reported this in 2018. However these studies rarely look at how International Baccalaureate bilingual programs use translanguaging in real work that crosses national borders.

Newer research on International Baccalaureate programs and English as an Additional Language contexts, like the work by Gogvadze in 2024 and NALDIC in 2025, emphasizes how important it is to make students feel included and like they belong. What makes this project special is that it took place in a real classroom setting, where bilingual talk actually helped

bridge the distance between students and made them feel like they were participating equally. International Baccalaureate bilingual programs were used in a way that made a difference.

Third, the numbers that showed empathy were really surprising: ninety one percent agreed that “we are different but equal” and eighty nine percent felt connected to the group. This is what the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO meant by citizenship in everyday life back in 2015. People feel empathy because they see things they have in common even when they are different. The mirror class was like a place where people could learn about each other, a kind of “laboratory” where children could see things that are common to everyone like the food eaten such as corn or maize and the things done every day like routines and games, and they could see that being different is a good thing, not something that separates people. The idea of Nussbaum and Sen’s capabilities approach from the year 2000 is really about giving people the freedom to connect with others from places and think about what is right and wrong even when they are very young.

Research on the Primary Years Programme always shows that it helps people think about the world and feel for others as Dix and Sniedze found out in 2020. However not many studies have looked at how this works when there are differences between places like between the North and the South.

These results mean that when people from different cultures talk to each other online it can help break down barriers like distance and lack of resources and it can help people make good choices in a way that Paulo Freire would agree with which is through real conversations with each other. Virtual intercultural moments like these can really create a sense of responsibility in people to do what is right and Nussbaum and Sen’s capabilities approach is about that.

The project is really useful because it gives a way to do things over and over. It is a way of working together called a transnational PYP inquiry strand. This strand combines two things: translanguaging and mirror-class collaboration. The goal is to deal with the differences between people. The project also helps to fill in some missing information in the research. For example there is not a lot of research on PYP work that connects different groups of people who may not have the same advantages. The project is based on the work of Bores-García and others from 2023.

The project gives teachers some easy to understand ideas. These ideas include being open about translanguaging to help students, using tools that let people work together at the time to build empathy in diverse groups, and changing activities to fit the real world without losing any important details. The project is about the PYP and translanguaging and how these things can help teachers and students. All of this lines up with SDG 4.7 on global citizenship education and the IB’s expansion in multilingual settings (IBO, 2025 facts: over 8,700 programmes worldwide).

There are some limitations to consider. The sample was really small and not very balanced with 26 on one side and 9 on the other. This means results have to be considered carefully about applying to everyone. The good thing is that it actually makes the results more realistic for situations that are not equal. The dual role as teacher and researcher could affect the results. Efforts were made to be aware of biases and findings were checked with the people involved. For future work it would be interesting to try this with bigger groups or to follow the children over a longer period to see if they really develop more agency and empathy. It could also be helpful to include families in the cultural exchange programs.

In the end, this experience shows that primary classrooms don’t have to stay stuck behind borders. They can become places of ethical, multilingual inquiry bridging theory and everyday practice in unequal contexts, and pushing the PYP toward being a true tool for human development and global solidarity.

Conclusions

This project shows that students can really benefit from a kind of international program called PYP. It helps students learn by asking questions and finding answers on their own. They also

learn to speak two languages, like English and Spanish in a way that feels natural to them. This program teaches students to be global citizens too.

The project had some goals and it was able to meet them. Students did activities that combined different subjects, like math and language. This helped them see how things are connected around the world. They also learned to use English and Spanish in a way so they could express their thoughts and feelings easily. Importantly they learned to understand and appreciate people who are different from them and to see that everyone is connected as human beings. The PYP experience really helped fifth grade students from different backgrounds come together and learn from each other.

The main things found out are:

- The inquiry really helped with thinking and looking at things from different angles. A lot of questions were asked 68 to be exact and improvement was seen in the CER rubric with an average score of 4.2 out of 5. This is what people like Dewey back in 1938 and Freire in 1968 said would happen when people learn by doing things and having experiences. It is also what the International Baccalaureate Organization said in 2020 and what Bores-García and their team said in 2023 about how people learn in PYP settings, which is a way of teaching that focuses on letting students find out things for themselves.
- Translanguaging happened on its own and also in a very thoughtful way. It helped the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. This is something that Jim Cummins talked about in the year 2000. It also supported the ideas of Ofelia García from the year 2014. Her idea is about a repertoire model. This model was used in a kind of collaboration. This collaboration was driven by questions. It involved people from two different countries. It also helped to add to the information that was had before about Primary Years Programme English as an Additional Language situations.
- People around the world are learning to be good global citizens. They are doing this by being kind to each other and respecting their differences. For example 91 percent of students said that they believe everyone is different but equal. 89 percent of students said that they feel connected to others. This is what the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO said should be done back in 2015. It is also what people like Nussbaum and Sen were talking about in the year 2000. They said that children should be taught to be empathetic and to understand that everyone has abilities from a very young age. Global citizenship is very important. People are learning to live it every day through these kinds of practices.

This study is important because it brings together two ideas, translanguaging and transnational PYP inquiry. It looks at how these ideas work in parts of the world like the United States and Colombia where schools are not always equal. The study helps understand how students can learn to be kind and caring towards people from other cultures and how they can use their bilingual skills to succeed.

The study is based on the work of people like Dix and Sniedze who wrote about this in 2020 and Bores-García and others who wrote about it in 2023. What is really useful about this study is that it gives teachers a plan they can follow to help their students learn in a multilingual way even when the world is not always fair. The plan is a six-week unit that teachers can adapt to fit their classrooms and it includes a special idea called a mirror class. Translanguaging and transnational PYP inquiry are the keys to making this work. The study shows how educators can use these ideas to make a real difference in the lives of their students.

The PYP policy and practice have some implications. There is a need to focus on using translanguaging pedagogies in programs. Tools should also be used to make sure students have fair and equal intercultural encounters. Flexible scaffolds have to be designed to deal with logistical disparities. This is in line with the International Baccalaureate's growth. They have more than 8,700 programmes worldwide as of October 2025. The International Baccalaureate Organization said this in 2025. It also goes along with the Sustainable Development Goals, goal 4.7 which emphasizes the importance of global citizenship education. The PYP policy and practice are very important here.

Here are some ideas for making things better and what can be looked at in the future: planning can be done together every week at all the sites, portfolios can be shared, virtual exchanges that include families can be arranged, and training can be designed together for the binational teams. If studies are done over time, it can be seen if the positive effects on how much control people have over their lives and how much they care about others really last. If the project is done in other areas, more certainty can be had that it will work everywhere.

Ultimately, this project illustrates that primary education need not be confined by borders. By lifting eyes to shared skies, measuring common shadows, and listening across languages, classrooms become laboratories of humanity where inquiry opens minds, bilingualism opens hearts, and citizenship opens worlds. In an era of division, such experiences seed curiosity, respect, and hope for a more connected future.

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