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Implications of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Online Environments where Emergent Bilinguals Participate

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IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE EMERGENT

BILINGUALS PARTICIPATE

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative case study aimed to better understand if culturally relevant pedagogy practices are happening in an early childhood dual-language classroom, and what knowledge does a bilingual teacher have of culturally relevant pedagogy. The theoretical framework is guided by the landmark theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). The research questions that guided this study were: (1) To what extend was culturally relevant pedagogy practices happening in an early childhood dual-language classroom? (2) What is the level of an early childhood bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy? The findings in this study suggest that the teacher, who shares similar cultural and linguistic background as the students, include some of the CRP components in online learning without receiving proper training. The exploration of the virtual lessons affirms the frequency of some CRP components happening in an early childhood dual-language online environment where emergent bilinguals are participating based on the three CRP criteria: the ability to develop students academically, willingness to nurture, and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical consciousness.

Research has not yet been conducted relative to online environments in dual-language classrooms within the context of CRP. The findings from this study may have the potential to

guide further investigations on the significant role of CRP implementation in online

environments where emergent bilinguals are participating in improving their academic

achievement.

DEDICATION

You can become anything you want to be *si lo haces bien y con ganas*. With humility and lots of gratitude, I dedicate this dissertation to my closest family from Puerto Rico, my abuela Petra, a.k.a. as *mamita,* abuelo Ángel, a.k.a. vama, my mother Priscilla, and my uncle Miguel.

The journey has never been easy. I have always been an overachiever. My abuela was the core and inspiration of the family. No matter how difficult the situation, she was always in control y *bien luchadora*. Special recognition to my mom, who was always by my side taking care of her little one—now, it's my turn to take care of her.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my husband Jim, my son Blake, and my daughter Mia. I am eternally grateful for their patience, for the many hours I spent away from them studying, and for always encouraging me to keep going. Their unparalleled support has been the engine that kept me going throughout this arduous process. I hope I became a good example for my children; perseverance is all you need to accomplish your goals.

Last but not least, to my UTRGV colleagues, Raul and Lucy, for being my sidekicks all the way. To Julia and Lillian for always being there to encourage each other and my fantastic cohort colleagues. To my dearest friend Martha Garza, we found each other many years ago, became good friends, and in this long journey, we have shared many ups and downs but also many dreams. We all encouraged each other to keep going, *en las buenas y no tan buenas*. Most importantly, I praise God for his presence and strengths because without Him nothing is possible, but with Him, all things are possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recently, most schools in the United States shifted from face-to-face to digital learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sayer & Braun, 2020). We are now literally entering students' homes virtually. As a result, students have encountered a different way to receive instruction via online learning with different—remote—interactions. Adapting to this new way of learning has been challenging for most, if not all, students, but it has been even more critical for emergent bilinguals who are more likely to feel isolated, disconnected, or overwhelmed without face-to-face contact. In this qualitative case study, a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) framework is used to examine if culturally relevant pedagogy practices are happening in an early childhood dual-language classroom, and what knowledge does a bilingual teacher have of culturally relevant pedagogy. This study contributes to current literature related to online environments where emergent bilinguals participate.

CRP is essential for emergent bilinguals because it opens a space for equitable access in education by recognizing the importance of prior knowledge and their community. According to Garcia et al. (2008) an emergent bilingual is a bilingual student that is acquiring English through schooling and continues to function using their home language as well as in English. A culturally sensitive environment can help students see themselves as part of the curriculum by sharing their voices to become their advocates. Culturally equitable spaces improve academic achievement

because students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Further, including culturally relevant pedagogy is critical in online learning environments because it facilitates authentic student engagement in virtual lessons. Tapping into students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds meets their individual needs. This study examined students' engagement with lessons when their culture was included. The framework had a threefold focus on (a) students' learning, (b) developing cultural competence, and (c) fostering incremental self-reflection through critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The practice of implementing CRP begins with a mindset of meeting the needs of emergent bilinguals, valuing their culture and background, and focusing on methods that help students develop skills to deconstruct the information they learn. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot be used when working with a diverse group of students who bring various classroom experiences and have different needs.

In this chapter, I provide a problem statement as it relates to how the level of CRP implementation in an online early childhood dual-language environment and what knowledge does the teacher has of CRP. Then, I discuss the intersectionality of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy as they relate to emergent bilinguals. Further, I make connections among the critical relationships involving the importance of the funds of knowledge, teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the relevance of teachers' knowledge of CRP. The following sections discuss the problem statement and purpose, research questions, and the significance of the study related to the research questions. It follows with an overview of the research design and concludes by providing key terms related to the study and the outline of my dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

CRP is a pedagogical approach that perceives students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as a critical component in meeting their needs. Research has not yet been conducted relative to online environments in dual-language classrooms within the context of CRP. Thus, exploring current practices in dual-language classrooms could be significant to provide insight into the importance of implementing CRP to meet the needs of emergent bilinguals by making connections between what they know and what they are learning. A landmark study by Ladson Billings (1995) explained three essential components under the culturally relevant umbrella: student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The goals of these components are to ensure we provide minority students equitable opportunities to improve academic performance. To support those benefits, this study explores how CRP occurs in online environments.

> Uzuner (2009) argued that
>
> distance learning contexts (such as the North American distance learning contexts) where active participation in discussions is highly valued, instructors should make specific efforts to promote critique and divergence and encourage students to create a safe space where opinions, experiences, beliefs, and knowledge can be shared. (p. 11)

Furthermore, if students are allowed to critique information and encouraged to share their beliefs and the knowledge they bring from home, the outcomes of current online classes will yield positive results. Correspondingly, if teachers do not have adequate background knowledge of CRP, we must explore how that affects their practice.

Culturally relevant studies have indicated the benefits of student engagement and academic achievement (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017) demonstrating

the ineffectiveness of using traditional teaching methods that do not meet the needs of emergent bilinguals. CRP is not a prescribed one-time-only practice; it is an ongoing practice that involves validation and mutual respect. It is not only a celebration of culture for one month; it requires understanding culture and implementing good teaching that values students' interests and background. Acquiring this level of cultural knowledge requires conscientious planning to construct an approach that authentically includes students, families, and their communities, by acknowledging who they are and recognizing their language and culture represent valuable assets.

The principles and tenets of CRP include (a) providing student-centered instruction that fosters critical thinking by drawing upon the students' background and cultural experiences, (b) empowering teachers to create an environment where they learn from each other's culture, and (c) creating equitable spaces that validate students' identities and have a positive impact. Further, CRP is used to maximize student learning opportunities by pursuing social justice (Bird, 2016; Colina Neri et al., 2019; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Wynter-Hoyte, et al., 2019).

It is essential to understand what happens in online environments where emergent bilinguals participate and to examine the use of instructional practices that help them engage in meaningful activities online. This requires thoughtfulness, pre-planning, and an understanding of the three essential components of the framework. This also supports my decision to focus on how teachers' knowledge of CRP impacts the implementation of instructional practices that consider diversity, funds of knowledge, and critical consciousness. Howard (2003) argued that only by engaging in ongoing critical personal reflection—sincerely challenging their own belief systems—could teachers begin to understand how their positionality influences students— sometimes positively, but also negatively. During this unexpected switch to online learning,

teachers need to empower students to participate by sharing their current experiences. Similarly, Gullo (as cited in Ferlazzo, 2020) noted critical self-reflection is healthy for students. Engaging in a process of constantly reflecting on current beliefs and comparing personal perspectives to new information helps students construct deeper meaning, more realistic understandings, and a more advantageous perception of themselves and others. Online learning environments can be structured to encourage all of these endeavors. Further, conducting online learning activities that motivate students to learn by maintaining a connection between home and school sustains their enthusiasm for learning because it simply makes sense.

Much remains unknown about culturally responsive online environments during the COVID-19 pandemic; for this reason, further investigation into this topic is necessary so that evidence can be established to support emergent bilinguals' academic success in an online environment. This study will contribute to the literature by deepening the understanding of how to identify if CRP is implemented in online environments. Implementing CRP encourages emergent bilinguals' participation in ways that affirm their cultural identities and minimize the potential for feeling isolated, disconnected, or overwhelmed.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study encompasses two purposes. The first explores features used to promote CRP in online environments in an early childhood dual-language classroom. The second explores how teachers' knowledge of CRP plays an essential role in online environments, particularly as it relates to building students' funds of knowledge and culture. The CRP framework addresses the persisting gap that exists in historically marginalized students based on equity and social justice This approach is a transformative paradigm for teachers and students that can deconstruct inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This study focused on how CRP is included—or not—in

online lessons delivered in two languages in a dual-language classroom. This research seeks to make sense of how the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy is conveyed in online scenarios guided by these two questions:

- RQ1 – To what extent were culturally relevant pedagogical practices happening in an early childhood dual-language childhood classroom?

- RQ2 – What is the level of an early childhood bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy?

Early childhood years establish the foundation for the educational journey of a student. Using the framework of CRP during online learning in a lower grade, I established the importance of creating a solid learning community during online learning drawing on the students' funds of knowledge and culture. If young students feel supported while acquiring academic language and have their cultural needs satisfied, they are more likely to achieve academic success. Machado stated,

> In the early childhood classroom, teachers might draw upon students' cultural funds of knowledge as a literacy resource in developmentally appropriate ways…composing multimodal texts and drawing upon students' cultural funds of knowledge help students engage their full linguistic and cultural repertoires. (2017, p. 319)

The critical foundation of sustaining early childhood emergent students' home practices and connecting them with online learning activities is provided in the following overview of this study.

Significance of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic created a sudden shift in many schools. Most students were moved from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning. Emergent bilinguals and their

families were swamped with a lot of information, and students no longer had social interaction with their peers—which is very important to develop continuous comprehensive input while learning a second language (Cummins, 2007). This created a new academic environment for emergent bilinguals that continues to count for accountability in terms of academic progress. This qualitative case study critically explored the current online environment to examine existing culturally relevant pedagogy implementation and a teacher's practices.

By using a culturally relevant pedagogy framework, I explored the opportunities students have to make meaning of the lessons. Samson and Collins (2012) mentioned that "the norms for behavior, communication, and interactions with others that ELLs [English language learners] use in their homes often do not match the norms that are enforced in the school setting" (p. 10). Suppose, due to the constraints of online learning, more lessons are delivered via lecturing during a Zoom session. This minimizes opportunities for students to share their funds of knowledge. In that case, we do not activate the students' prior knowledge which we know facilitates learning.

Currently, emergent bilinguals are expected to construct a mental representation of the content, delivered via Zoom, which aggravates the issue of linguistic comprehension because now they do not have opportunities to interact linguistically with their peers. This makes remote learning more difficult by isolating all students, but the impact is more crucial for emergent bilinguals. We currently have a lack of studies related to CRP in the online environment. Studies are needed to increase emergent bilinguals' equitable access to high-quality, engaging opportunities to reach academic success, act as critical agents to take ownership of their learning.

Research Design Overview

This study used a single-case-study qualitative approach. This is the most appropriate methodology because it allowed me to observe a natural environment through pre-recorded Zoom lessons. In a qualitative case study, the researcher investigates a particular instance of a specific problem occurring every day (Gay et al., 2012). The observation of the lessons gave me an opportunity to explore whether CRP practices are included in the dual-language lessons. The implementation of the strategies used in the online lessons was explored based on a CRP rubric criteria frequency observed in Zoom lessons and the interview explored the degree of teachers' knowledge in CRP.

The study took place in a public-school district in a South Texas town close to the border with Mexico. The school district mandates a 50/50 dual-language program in English and Spanish. This study followed the protocols of IRB approval, school district permission for the study, established recruitment procedures, data collection, and analysis of all the information collected. The teacher was selected from an early childhood grade participating in a dual-language program. The study took place during the 2020–21 school year.

The study included primary data sourced from Zoom lessons previously collected by the district for their own purposes. Secondary sources included lesson plans, and an interview. Triangulation was used to corroborate data collected from multiple sources so as to strengthen the study's credibility. The data was analyzed by organizing the information and using axial coding to identify categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In chapter III, I explained the procedures and justification for this qualitative case study approach. The next section contains definitions of key terms used in this study.

Definitions of Key Terms

Critical Consciousness

Providing students opportunities to identify and critique cultural norms, and challenge information presented to them in the curriculum in order to question social forces that produce inequity (Ladson-Billings 1995).

Cultural Competence

Using culture as a vehicle for learning where students are encouraged to use their native language as they learn a second one. Ladson-Billings (1994) pointed out one should be fluent in at least one other culture to embrace diversity.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy—CRP

A framework that recognizes the significance of students achieving academic success, the relevance of maintaining cultural competence, and the importance of developing a critical consciousness to challenge what is presented to them and their status quo.

Culturally Responsive Teaching—CRT

A pedagogy where practitioners integrate engaging strategies using prior knowledge and cultural experiences to make learning relevant for diverse students. Gay (2018) coined the term to identify effective ways to make learning relevant.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy—CSP

Culturally sustaining pedagogy has a strong foundation in creating environments that support students' cultural identities, academic investments, and values (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Emergent Bilinguals

These are students who learn English from the society that surrounds them, continue to function at home using their native language, and become functionally bilingual. It removes the

label of limited English proficient or English learners and creates a positive characteristic of students developing bilingualism without limitations (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge tap into the students' experiences and cultural backgrounds, recognizing their knowledge and applying it in school. It builds a connection that validates students' background knowledge to make sense of new learning. This practice also involves engaging with families and students to create strong relationships that bridge distances between school and community (Moll et al., 1992). Students feel more included and valued when we make home school connections.

Hybrid Learning

A combination of face-to-face and online learning; hybrid learning was used during the COVID-19 pandemic is to follow CDC guidance on social distancing. In a typical hybrid learning environment, face-to-face learning is very limited.

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Outline of the Dissertation

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In Chapter I, I articulated the research problem, the two research questions and explained the purpose and the significance of the study. I also included information on the research design and relevant key term definitions to help the reader understand specialization concepts. In Chapter II, I provided a literature review of academic language and how it has been defined, investigated by researchers, and how the relevant information will be operationalized. This chapter positions the relevance of the study focusing on CRP in dual-language classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasizing on the need and relevance of the study. In addition, I examined existing research on what knowledge of CRP an early childhood bilingual teacher has. The conceptual framework guiding this case study was based on Ladson-Billings' (1995)

landmark work on CRP which focused on three areas: an ability to develop students academically, willingness to support cultural competence, and development of sociopolitical consciousness. Chapter III included the rationale for choosing a case study for the investigation. Chapter III also described in depth the process of how I collected and analyzed the data. Chapter VI presented the findings observed during the Zoom lessons and the interview. Chapter V has conclusion information focusing on presenting the responses to the research questions posed in Chapter I, and also provides information regarding the implication of findings and practice, information for future research, limitations of the study, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The pandemic has changed the way students have historically received instruction; over the past year, many school districts have had to change to the online educational delivery of lessons instead of the regular face-to-face scenario. This rapid transition to online instruction had to be made with little anticipation and limited understanding of how online instruction might impact emergent bilinguals in particular. To contribute to the discussion related to the abrupt change, the literature review focused on elements related to cultural relevant pedagogy pertaining to how students now make connections with academic concepts in virtual classrooms. This chapter identified existing research related to culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to explore practices happening during online learning in dual-language classrooms to position the need and relevance of this study. The criterion used for this literature review focused on the use of reliable sources from experienced researchers. Searching for literature involved reading different sources such as educational journal articles, websites, book sections, textbooks, and online blogs concerning the study topic. To inform the discussion, I began by providing a brief history of bilingual education in the United States from the early 60s to the present day, as well as background on dual-language programs. Information on the principles of dual-language education related to culture and sociopolitical consciousness is essential for emergent bilinguals to develop biculturalism.

To further the discussion and establish the significance of this research, I framed my research on a review of culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and culturally sustaining pedagogies that identified relevant instructional practices for emergent bilinguals. Additionally, I explored the partnership between the essentialness of funds of knowledge related to the socio-cultural aspect of emergent bilinguals that views their culture as an opportunity to construct meaning. Then, I provided information on the relevant concept of the alternative of teaching education online during the time of COVID-19 for emergent bilinguals and its implications. Finally, I explored an overview of the literature about teacher's knowledge. At the end of this chapter, the literature review was analyzed and connected with the problem statement. To date, extensive literature is available from scholars explaining the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay 2002; Hammond, 2015; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2013). Nonetheless, although such extensive research on the importance of CRP exists, we need to better understand how culturally relevant pedagogy implementation occurs in online environments for emergent bilinguals.

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Bilingual Education and Dual-Language Programs

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Throughout the history of the United States, from its colonial period to modern times, education has been used as a tool to assimilate and Americanize races—with the English language being the most powerful weapon of Americanization (MacDonald, 2004). In 1965, under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the U.S. Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, (commonly referred to as ESEA). This Act committed to provide equal access to quality education for everyone emphasizing high standards and accountability. It specifically designated funds for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to promote parent involvement (Paul, n.d.). One section designated federal funds for compensatory and

remedial programs for underprivileged students; this was followed in 1967 with a bilingual

education amendment (MacDonald, 2004). Approved in 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was

intended to help limited English speaking students who came from homes where families did not

speak English; this limited familiarity with the dominant language contributed to learning

difficulties for these. Regardless of intent, categorizing students as "underprivileged" or

"remedial" had a negative connotation in education that framed emergent bilinguals as a group

that needs to be fixed through assimilation. Also, the underlying intent was for emergent

bilinguals to transition into English language proficiency faster.

The Bilingual Education Act was categorical in nature. In keeping with federal legislative

tradition, funding under the new bill was to be used by local educational agencies to develop

innovative educational programs for specific categories of children (e.g., "poor school children

with limited English-speaking abilities," San Miguel, 2004 p. 27). For the most part this was an

important step in the trajectory of bilingual programs as it gave school districts the opportunity to

develop effective programs; these programs are now referred to as dual-language programs.

In 1963 in the state of Florida, Coral Way Bilingual Elementary had the first publicly

funded dual-language program, aptly known as the Coral Way (University of Florida, n.d.). This

bilingual and bicultural program focused on students who spoke English and Spanish. The

intention of the project was to help students learn at school without losing their native language

and at the same time, to maintain their cultural roots. This was partly motivated by the fact that

Cuban parents fully intended to eventually go back to Cuba and did not want their children to

lose their language and culture (Crawford, 2004). In this first dual-language model, curriculum

was mainly taught in the students' native language and English was used as a second language,

keeping Cuban cultural traditions as part of the curriculum. In 1968, this bilingual and bicultural education was added to the federal bilingual law.

The promotion of dual-language programs has worked to some degree. It has created a paradigm shift as scholars, in fields like sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, bilingual education, and related disciplines have moved away from traditional subtractive programs to additive bilingual programs that embrace all languages and cultures as assets—what some scholars refer to as the "multilingual turn" (Menken & Sanchez, 2019, p. 743). The idea is to allow students to continue learning using their native language while adding a second academic language during their educational trajectory. This is reflective of Cummins (2000), whose concepts of "common underlying proficiency" and linguistic interdependence stressed the positive benefits of transfer in language learning. Students who participate in additive dual-language programs do not need to learn the same concept twice; once they master a skill in one language, they can transition to the second language—that is why we call dual-language programs additive.

Abundant studies highlight the effectiveness of dual-language programs and the effectiveness of closing the achievement gap for emergent bilinguals (Collier & Thomas, 2017, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Paradis et al., 2011). A study established by Thomas and Collier (2002) affirmed dual-language programs as the only programs that maintain the highest levels of academic achievement while meeting the linguistic needs of emergent bilinguals. Instruction in the primary language, which students receive in early grades, has a direct relationship between cognitively challenging education and comprehensive English input that later will show in progress on academic achievement in secondary school (Crawford, 2004). These cognitive skills emerged through meaningful social language interactions aligned with culturally constructed resources that help students internalize academic information.

The Texas Education Code, Subchapter 89, defines two dual-language program models under the umbrella of bilingual programs as:

* Dual-language immersion/one-way is a bilingual/biliteracy program model in which students identified as emergent bilinguals and are served in both English and another language and are prepared to meet reclassification criteria in order to be successful in English-only instruction not earlier than six or later than seven years after the student enrolls in school. Instruction provided in a language other than English in this program model is delivered by a teacher appropriately certified in bilingual education under TEC, §29.061.

* Dual-language immersion/two-way is a bilingual/biliteracy program model in which students identified as English learners are integrated with students proficient in English and are served in both English and another language and are prepared to meet reclassification criteria in order to be successful in English-only instruction not earlier than six or later than seven years after the student enrolls in school. Instruction provided in a language other than English in this program model is delivered by a teacher appropriately certified in bilingual education under TEC, §29.061, for the assigned grade level and content area.

Both programs have the goal of attaining full proficiency in another language as well as English.

In order for students to attain the highest levels of sociocultural achievement academically and linguistically, the program structure must adhere to a solid foundation based on the fidelity of implementation focused on the native language; long term bilingual programs provide the opportunity to close the achievement gap (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Howard et al., 2018; Soltero, 2016). We must not forget students can expand their language skills in dual-

language programs when we validate their identities. This is more than just speaking two languages; it involves the development of cross-cultural identities and language orientation (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Zúñiga, 2016). The sociopolitical aspect of dual-language programs is based on establishing equitable treatment for all students. That includes clear goals that meet cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic needs of emergent bilinguals (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008; de Jong, 2011; Genesee et al., 2006). It is imperative to explore whether online delivery of lessons might either limit or exclude the possibility of providing meaningful learning experiences that focus on culturally relevant pedagogy. The following section discusses how the literature has defined the topic of the culturally relevant framework.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Framework

The following section discusses how culturally relevant pedagogy is crucial in framing the conversation around how to include CRP in online learning. Ladson-Billings opens this section because of her landmark contribution in CRP. Ladson-Billings (2014) defined academic success as "intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences" (p. 75). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the emotional wellbeing of many students (Pierre, 2020). Thus, it is important to include activities that help students feel connected with their peers and the online lesson materials to lower anxiety levels. When students engage in meaningful activities, they can connect them with previous experiences using higher-order thinking skills. Teachers can engage students in conversations about their current situations to engage in critical discussions about inequities and then draw upon those experiences to identify barriers and brainstorm solutions. This helps students to feel validated and value the content presented.

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Ladson-Billings (1995) stated, "culturally relevant teaching must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical consciousness" (p. 483). Teachers need to be allowed to reflect on what practices they could implement in advance, develop clear objectives and expectations, include visual cues for active linguistic interactions, and create lesson plans that cause these to happen. Activating prior knowledge and allowing students to exercise their strengths can develop students and overcome any cultural differences, creating a strong classroom culture.

Uzuner (2009) defined culture "as acquired behaviors, perspectives, and values characteristic of a particular group or community" (p. 2). Using this definition, whether we are in higher education or PK–12, we see students who have acquired negative perspectives of school based on their family perspectives or situation, for example when they do not feel connected with the curriculum presented. At the same time, other students have positive perspectives about the school, also learned from family perspectives. For this reason, it is important to help students understand their value as unique individuals who can contribute positively to the educational system. Uzuner (2009) held a strong point that distance education environments could be more susceptible to the traditional educational setting's cultural conflicts. When students are withdrawn and on the path of pulling away, it can be more challenging to reach them in a distance education setting since we are not in physical contact with them. Thus, we need to observe what practices have been used to engage students in current virtual lessons. Ladson-Billings (2006) stated that teachers use CRP as a vehicle for learning. If the lessons are disconnected from the students' background and culture, it can translate into students disconnecting from lessons. It is essential to provide teachers with training of important

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components that specifically shows how to integrate culturally relevant lessons online creating

responsive teaching. Some examples of these components may include visuals for interaction in

the lessons and creating spaces for students to engage orally, introduce new concepts using

students' vocabulary or invite guest speakers related to students' culture to engage in critical

conversations with students. To drive the instruction in alignment to the three main domains

included in Ladson-Billings' CRP framework, teachers should begin at the making meaning

stage to develop students academically. One-way this can be accomplished is by activating prior

knowledge. For example, students could be asked about how and for what purpose a geometric

shape is used at home to bridge home knowledge with a new skill taught at school. The goal is to

increase CRP in an online scenario to help students to feel connected with the lessons. This

simple activity is an example of how we can build background knowledge with cultural

information and at the same time show appreciation for the students' own culture while they

share it with the class.

Planned activities that expose learners to the value of students' culture create a space of

equity because they allow students to share their histories and traditions. CRP discusses the

importance of the sociopolitical consciousness; this part involves discussing the topics and the

current reality of what families are facing. It can be as simple as asking students to reflect on

how some things may not be available where they live, like libraries, certain items in their local

playground, not having a good grocery store or pharmacy nearby and only relying upon small

convenience stores and engaging with students in conversations where they are part of the

solution by for example writing letters to specific sectors empowering them to change the world.

Teachers must develop strategies to help students change their mindsets—to see

themselves in the curriculum creating meaningful connections. Creating a mindset requires

planning, to help students not to take everything for granted and to actively make connections between what they learn about, for example in history, to their background experiences and reflect on where they see themselves. Where is their place in the community? Teachers can add a reflection activity, for example, through journaling. This aligns with the development of sociopolitical consciousness CRP domain as part of successful schooling. Culturally relevant pedagogy equips students to actively participate in a space to learn about, discuss, and challenge what they know, validating their identities. Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that in order for a teacher to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy, they need to help students "recognize, understand, and critique their current social inequities" (p.476). These pedagogical practices can help teachers to include essential components in diverse classrooms. Teachers can explore the students' sociocultural perspective when presenting a history lesson that explains a historical event and engages in an inquiry a writing project, where students can reflect on how do they think Latino people felt during that event which values students' voices and allows them to add a perspective that was probably not presented in a textbook.

Education is a tool that students can use to critique social contexts, transforming them into a critical change component. Souto-Manning and Martell (2016) said, "when there are no mirrors and everything is a window, there can be socioemotional and academic implications" (p. 8). Therefore, instead of windows, teachers should create mirrors that allow students to externalize their current realities, especially during a pandemic, to understand they are not alone. It is essential to consider what is happening in their lives and create a strong, culturally responsive community to empower students intellectually, embracing the issues of not receiving proper education that celebrates and recognizes they can transform instructional practices into a positive support system.

Scholars repeatedly use words like engaging, or validating identity in reference to support practices to help marginalized minority students (Abacioglu et al. 2020; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; García & Woodley, 2015; Ladson-Billings 2020; Pierre 2020). These words focus on the intersectionality between academics and culture. When we add curriculum engaging activities, we validate their funds of knowledge, validate who they are, and create meaningful spaces that make feel that they fit into the mandated curriculum. Aligning learning with the students' background helps to acknowledge that all students can learn. Recognizing students' strengths, language, and culture is a practice that creates a robust metacognitive development where students can express their ideas more confidently.

Many English learners struggle with technological proficiency, inadequate support, and lack of engagement (Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020). For these reasons, teachers need to create opportunities to prioritize meaningful communication. Establishing culturally responsive pedagogy in online teaching allows emergent bilinguals to exercise strengths that cater to their learning styles. If students consider the lessons relevant to their lives, they will be motivated to learn. We are now entering students' homes virtually, therefore, creating a bridge between school and home is essential. The following section discuss how the literature has defined culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

This section provides an overview of how culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been defined and operationalized in the literature. Gay (2010) defined CRT as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). Constructing a learning path that extends schooling to integrate students' cultures, consciously

creating a solid bond between previous experiences and their education, will meet students'

needs and ultimately impact academic achievement.

Another recent definition of culturally responsive teaching was shared by Hammond

(2015) who defined it as,

> the educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning
>
> making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural
>
> knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content
>
> in order to promote effective information processing. (p. 30)

To break the disadvantaged label cycle, we need to raise the bar in bilingual classrooms

by including a rigorous curriculum that helps culturally and linguistically diverse students

become independent learners. Therefore, it is essential to develop online lessons that tap into

students' cognitive process. Activities connected to real-life experiences help them experience

complex thinking and shift the deficit status to an enrichment status. When teachers have high

expectations and they move from providing only a compensatory curriculum to a more

challenging one that meets the cultural needs of students it self-empowers students to learn

(Sheets, 1995).

> In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Richard Shaull stated,
>
> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the
>
> younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it
>
> becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and
>
> creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their
>
> world. (as cited in Freire, 1993, p. 219)

With that in mind, we need to focus our efforts to critically engage students online in the current hybrid teaching reality that includes a culturally responsive teaching approach. Critical objectives are those that allow students to reflect on the reason and value for learning skills. The intangible elements they bring from home through their culture need to bridge home and school. Even though students now attend school via Zoom, they still come to school with worldview experiences and perspectives that should be included in the process of teaching content knowledge. Authentic practices of discussing, for example, a math topic through the use of rhythms and music that students can recognize will positively impact the lesson. For these practices to happen, teachers need to move away from only using a traditional institutionalized curriculum to understand their students' culture and engage in critical conversations to make meaningful connections. Valuing all students' cultures creates a positive environment that reduces their affective filter because it helps them feel valued.

Adding to this body of literature, Hammond (2015) argued that teachers must understand the pedagogical process of culturally responsive practices and the strategies that go along with it to provide instruction that uses the students' culture as an essential component in lesson planning. She referred to a "ready for rigor framework that includes the components of awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and a community of learners and learning environments" (p. 32). The interconnection of these four areas will work if they are all synchronized with the goal to help students become independent learners. Dual-language teachers serve students from diverse cultural backgrounds; therefore, it is vital to get familiar with all the students' cultures and align a plan with the dual-language goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, and high academic achievement (Howard et al., 2018).

Some teachers may face the challenge of conceptualizing culturally relevant tools from theory to practice due to structural complexities when dealing with their own cultural bias or perhaps not receiving adequate professional development (Young, 2010). Reflecting on their cultural background is an essential component in the range of instructional approaches. Their own experiences, even if they are different, can help them understand the similarities and differences between cultures allowing them to create a space where everyone can feel safe and validated. Teachers must begin familiarizing themselves with the diverse students in their classroom and reflect on their cultural experiences. Allowing students to share authentic experiences, especially during online learning, and identifying points that some students may have in common can help students become active participants and take ownership of their learning.

Mellom et al. (2018) discussed the importance of engaging in culturally responsive instructional conversation with teachers regarding working with English learner students, and their academic outcomes. The more professional development that districts may offer and the more opportunities for teachers to share their beliefs, the better opportunities to learn how to build their students' strengths. As previously mentioned, teachers should respond positively and constructively when working with linguistically diverse students and use their cultural knowledge as an asset. They all come to school with different experiences and knowledge, creating an ideological paradigm shift of believing that students can use what they know to learn is a process. Allowing students to engage in meaningful instructional conversations is a way to apply what they know because they can put it in a familiar context (Mellom et al., 2018). When teachers view culture as an essential aspect of learning, it validates language interaction, promotes a positive environment, and creates more successful pedagogical practices.

In a similar analysis, Bassey (2016) focused on how culturally responsive teaching centers on social justice to create equitable social spaces. Through her narrative inquiry approach, we understand CRT is a method that sees culture as a strength recognizing differences as a relevant component to build a strong program. Teachers who see students as change agents in society can help them relate to the curriculum and motivate them to learn by developing cultural competencies and cultivating sociopolitical awareness. Bassey (2016) revealed that rather than focusing on the students' lack of resources and low performance, we should focus on creating a vibrant classroom environment by discussing current issues, identifying the root causes of the problem, and implementing transformative strategies.

These two authors establish the importance of integrating culturally responsive teaching as an intersectionality category in educational research. They call for action to design a space that transforms culturally responsive teaching into a pedagogy that creates meaningful activities for diverse students. Therefore, CRP could not only help students overcome online delivery of lessons that may create anxiety in understanding the skills taught, it could also provide opportunities for teachers to construct a meaningful online platform that values cultural norms and includes critical thinking. The following section will continue the discussion focusing on how to maintain cultural practices from home in school.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

In the literature discussed so far, culturally relevant pedagogy focused on ensuring that learning is relevant to emergent bilinguals through the implementation of cultural practices. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) has a strong foundation in creating environments that support students' cultural identities, academic investments, and values (Paris & Alim, 2017). One of its goals is to avoid assimilation, not allowing individuals to lose identity, language, and

culture. In order to best accomplish this, a central component of CSP is implementing forward thinking asset pedagogy that authentically brings student language and culture into socially just teaching and learning.

Paris and Alim (2017) were careful to illustrate their treatment of CSP. This practice is based on the new direction asset pedagogies are taking, calling for a progression in thinking about these pedagogies in a way that builds on culturally relevant pedagogy by adding to the rationale for including cultural practices in education. For example, questions such as for what purpose and with what outcomes are essential part of the process when planning. Several fundamental points found throughout Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies circle back to these essential questions and work to integrate student identities, values, dreams, and language in meaningful ways related to academic expectations and critical consciousness. CRP shifts the culture of power by not allowing dominant Anglo practices or linguistic supremacy (Alim & Smitherman, 2012) to take over the structure of the proper way to educate minority students. In other words, the lack of representation of Latinos in the curriculum must encourage teachers to advocate and reflect on their important roles and build strong cultural competences with the students.

Asset pedagogy can be effective when minoritized students are asked to share about themselves purposefully. When teachers allow students to share their experiences, visually represent their stories through journaling, and participate in, for example, *testimonio* activities, they learn more about others in the classroom. It is compelling to build a classroom community that centers on students' experience from home. Teachers work to empower students to be successful academically, creating a space to develop the students' critical consciousness and share how they feel while participating in the school environment promotes the validation of

their identity. For emergent bilinguals in dual-language classrooms participating in online lessons, establishing a connection between their language, their experiences, their culture entails meeting their needs.

Similarly, Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2019) examined the relation of creating critical spaces for learners to draw upon their experiences. Some groups organized movements like Brown and Black lives matter to resist dehumanization, but in the educational system students still struggle to identify themselves with what is presented in schools. The authors argue that current events prompted them to consider how teachers can foster these critical spaces and how they are sustained. In this study, the authors observed that when students and teachers engaged in critical spaces that disrupted metanarratives, students were more engaged in literacy practices. Consequently, they argued the lack of teachers' understanding leads to not dealing with societal issues, impacting students and communities. Their study positions the notion of increasing ways to validate and sustain CSP by creating opportunities for practitioners to voice their own beliefs on including and sustaining cultural and linguistic practices. A sustaining pedagogy also means creating space for teachers to feel empowered in challenging educational policies and practices not following prescribed norms by a dominant society.

Across these three cultural concepts, consistent evidence indicates teachers need to develop the two essential elements of students' critical consciousness and promote cultural competence in lessons. Most teachers need space to reflect and examine what works in their classroom based on the needs of their students. Nonetheless, there is a lack of robust research on the impact of not including CRP during online teaching, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, I will discuss the pedagogical dimensions of the funds of knowledge and its relevance to cultural practices.

Funds of Knowledge

An important element that arises from the literature review is the essential role of the funds of knowledge. Moll (2014) defined funds of knowledge as "those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well-being" (pp. 446–447). Students' life trajectories are full of valuable experiences that shaped who they are and can be a valuable resource to make connections between home and school. The dimensions of culture and lived experiences are interconnected because they create students' histories and are an essential factor for teachers to serve their students better. Teachers must be familiar with their students' backgrounds; they need to consider that the students' experiences will directly influence their learning trajectory. School experiences are not isolated trapped in a four-wall classroom; the extension of what students learn has to be connected to real-world experiences to really impact students. Thus, teachers must connect with the students' social life because they do not disconnect from how they learn to their social practices. Moll explained,

> As one learns, for instance, about the social and labour histories of families, one gains, from their perspective, an understanding of their historical particulars, their economic grounding, the important lived experiences of adults and children, and their agency in creating new cultural practices to address new needs, all of which generate essential and varied funds of knowledge for family life. (2014, p. 119)

Everyday life experiences, what students do every day at home, especially now during a pandemic, represent accumulated valuable information that can transform an institutionalized curriculum into a tool that values cultural influences.

It is essential to know that teachers must identify those funds of knowledge and use these cultural tools as part of the literacy learning process of emergent bilinguals. The emphasis right now is on using the aspects of funds of knowledge as an educational resource during online learning to mitigate learning loss. When students are active subjects in creating connections between home and school, the educational system validates their identity. Different strategies that allow students to explain their daily routines, share life experiences, and bring meaningful artifacts from home to explain their value create a positive learning environment of inclusion. Life trajectories for some students can be traumatic—they may experience many obstacles during this pandemic. If they feel a connection between this stage of their lives and schooling, there will be a strong emotional and intellectual bond that will help students to construct positive identities.

In this analysis of literature, Johnson and Johnson (2016) explored the motivation of classroom engagement for emergent bilinguals during literacy-based activities using a funds of knowledge framework. The approach that emphasized the students' personalized learning helped students make explicit connections between home and school. When teachers tapped into the students' funds of knowledge, they could reach high metacognitive awareness levels, increasing students' engagement. In other words, when we help students to make meaning of what they are learning by integrating lessons that invest in their participation creating a bridge to the classroom and the home culture, teachers enhance their academic development.

The educational investment these two authors refer to with the use of funds of knowledge for emergent bilinguals also focuses on the students' perspectives rather than looking at their difficulties with language acquisition. They recognized the critical role of language, how the students feel and how this may affect their willingness to learn. When educators scaffold the

students' background knowledge to their classroom practices enhances to a deeper level the students' engagement.

These authors' findings support the argument of the importance of creating a strong bridge between home and schools, especially now that we are entering students' homes via Zoom. Teachers' practices in the classrooms are an essential factor to motivate and engage students in the learning process. If they offer students the opportunity to draw from their funds of knowledge, it will create a more profound way to help students make meaningful connections. In this next section, I will focus on the shift to online teaching during COVID-19 and its challenges.

Teaching Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Recently, most schools in United States shifted from face-to-face learning to digital learning, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sayer & Braun, 2020). This unexcepted shift has been challenging for many students, but exceedingly challenging for approximately five million emergent bilinguals in U.S. K–12 schools (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Sayer and Braun claimed that emergent bilinguals face additional challenges such as communication challenges, minimal accommodation for EL families, and online resources that do not offer support for students' English acquisition. Consequently, students are deprived of social interactions to practice academic language that otherwise would have been available to them at school. Sayer and Braun expanded on Cummins' second language acquisition research pointing out that a key to learning a second language relies on opportunities for social interaction to sustain comprehension (Sayer & Braun, 2020, p. 3). Students who participate in a dual-language classroom practice language with their bilingual pairs. Arreguín-Anderson and Alanís (2019; see also Alanís, 2007) emphasized that "the idea that children are equipped with and enclosed to communicate using culturally relevant semiotic tools should challenge educators to design instructional spaces that

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capitalize on such inclination" (p. 16). Teachers are now faced with a new challenge to continue this practice in an online scenario.

The question that we now have is since children in dual-language classrooms engage in learning through conversations, how do linguistic, social norms work in a virtual classroom, allowing emergent bilinguals to naturally interact with language? The possibility to work in inquiry-based projects or interact with emergent bilingual pairs is now limited, decreasing the possibilities for meaning-making conversations with peers to enhance academic vocabulary comprehension. Arreguín-Anderson and Alanís (2019) stated that "one important reason to pair up students through the day is to increase opportunities to engage in active languaging so that both partners can learn content, but also so that they can acquire a second language in context" (p. 8). Identifying ways to use a sustaining pedagogy that actively fosters motivation and language interaction via Zoom needs to be further explored.

In dual-language programs, to make lessons more meaningful, the teacher should also integrate culturally sustaining pedagogical activities that include dynamic cultural spaces related to the students' language and identity. Samson and Collins (2012) mentioned that "the norms for behavior, communication, and interactions with others that emergent bilinguals use in their homes often do not match the norms that are enforced in the school setting" (p. 10). To create a reciprocal learning environment, between home and school connections, teachers need to become familiar with the emergent bilinguals' background to align instruction, understand cultural differences that may interfere classroom participation.

Currently, emergent bilinguals are expected to construct mental representations of content delivered via Zoom, which amplifies the issue of linguistic comprehension because now they do not have opportunities to interact linguistically with their peers making remote learning more difficult. In an EdSource publication Lavadenz and Armas (2020) mentioned "teachers

need to connect socially and emotionally with their English learner students by intentionally using these students' histories, knowledge, strengths and realities to facilitate new learning" (p. 1). Now, teachers are entering students' homes virtually and more than ever we need to ensure that there is a bridge between home and school, using the funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy as a resource. Montiel-Chamorro (2018) stated that "distance education delivery had limitations that were slow in the physical delivery of materials and lack of valuable feedback and communication" (p. 9).

Similarly, Mitchell Dove (2021) discusses the challenges and successes during remote learning transition due to COVID-19. Interaction with students has changed; students' emotional well-being is a crucial factor in embracing effective teaching practices. The complexity of navigating through these challenges is not an easy task. She discusses how some students were not ready to consume more content. Based on this situation, the implementation of instructional pedagogies that include re-shifting strategies to connect with cultural needs may help students to work in a more fluid way to express themselves comfortably. Mitchell Dove (2021) explained how she also has felt unmotivated, has had problems concentrating, and has lost interest in teaching. Educators have felt the tension of the new technology demands that involve hybrid instruction. She mentioned that allowing students to just discuss how they felt before starting the lesson helped to boost their morale. She also pointed out that, "Students were appreciative of opportunities to slow down, discuss the present moment, and hear how others were impacted by COVID. In this way we are able to capture the essence of humanity in a virtual setting" (p. 166). In other words, if we allow students to share their personal experiences, creating a safe space to decompress and share their emotions, we enrich the lessons with real-life experiences that may avoid the feeling of isolation because maybe other students feel the same way.

Primdahl et al. (2020) discussed how difficult it is when the teacher is not sitting down next to the student due to the pandemic. They expressed their concern that it affects the most vulnerable students during a time of crisis. Research in this area is sparse, but observations note that refugee learners or those with migrant backgrounds may be affected more by school closures. Staying in touch with students and creating online portals with all the technological barriers was a problem. Teachers had to be creative and start using new apps such as WhatsApp and Snapchat to engage students. Language barriers were another fact that challenge communication between teachers, students, and families. If they had a recent immigrant student from another country, they could not communicate well with them, which added an extra layer of frustration. It becomes clear that the pandemic and the online classroom setting present complex challenges for everyone; therefore, the lessons' structure must include non-verbal communication that includes visuals, provides socio-emotional support, and incorporates some remote structure level allows students to reconnect at their own pace. Next, I will discuss the implications of teachers' knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Teachers' Knowledge in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

This section explores the impact of teachers' knowledge in a practical theoretical model approach called culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2018, Ladson-Billings, 1995). Classroom practices in dual-language classrooms should be grounded in what helps emergent bilinguals achieve academic progress. If teachers develop practices that creates strong relationships with the parents of their emergent bilinguals, it creates a connection that strengthens academic performance (Ramirez et al. 2016). The efficacy of those practices should embrace the unique emergent bilinguals' background as an opportunity to incorporate their experiences. According to Redding (2019), when teachers share their cultural beliefs with students, there is a potential to

improve the performance of children academically and nonacademically (p. 499). In this scenario, teachers are more able to provide supportive relationships providing culturally relevant instruction. Villegas and Irvine (2010) argued three empirically based important points where they explain the benefits that teachers of color bring to school: (1) they serve as role models to all students; (2) since they tend to work in high minority urban schools, they reduce the acute shortage of educators; and (3) these teachers are well-suited for teaching minoritized students because they share and understand their cultural experiences. The potential of assigning teachers to match the students' population could reduce academic failure because teachers play a critical role in the schooling process and because students can mirror themselves with practitioners who share similar experiences.

We need to involve all stakeholders in providing culturally relevant pedagogy training for teachers to demonstrate explicit ways to connect with emergent bilinguals. Paris and Alim (2017 referred to Ladson-billings (1995) when they said, "A teacher capable of fostering student learning makes a careful assessment of what knowledge and skills students begin with and builds from there" (p. 142). They mentioned that teachers should take the initiative to learn about their emergent bilinguals' cultural histories. Not everything will change overnight, and teachers need to receive training and time to practice these strategies.

According to Morton and Bennett (2010), urban universities can play an essential role in promoting achievement for all students. The study discussed the existence of a gap between White and minority students in standardized tests. To seek solutions, they suggested providing pre-service teacher candidates with field experiences working with minority students to connect with them and their prior experiences. Allowing teachers to go through hands-on preservice experiences contributes to understanding how to implement CRP based on students' needs. If

these student teachers were allowed to provide instructional support to students based on authentic lessons related to their needs, it put students in the center of learning. In this program, student teachers were asked to write lesson plans that showed connections between the skills, children's literature based on students' experiences and interest. Morton and Bennett (2010) mentioned, "teacher educators need to facilitate pre-service teacher involvement with low-income, minority students in thoughtful ways that will help them recognize students' individual strengths instead of viewing them from a deficit perspective" (p. 140). These pre-service teachers experienced "ah ha" moments as they had the opportunity to plan and implement lessons. They admitted to being nervous at first due to a lack of confidence, but they also admitted the opportunity to plan and prepare played a positive role. In other words, teachers' knowledge of how to implement CRP as instructional strategy support increased their confidence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had to quickly switch to an online delivery of lessons, which may be the right time to provide professional development to help them understand how to integrate CRP in online classes because students are now working from home. When we provide teachers the ability to serve their students better, it creates a positive environment for both the teachers and the students. Ladson-Billings (2001) made a powerful statement when she said that the concept of knowledge it is not strictly defined; instead, it is "shared, recycled, and constructed" (p. 481). This means that if teachers are experiencing something new, we must provide the necessary guidance and space for them to develop best practices in their lessons. The integration of the current curriculum with CRP is an essential component to ensure emergent bilinguals are using the tools that they have at home an engage in meaningful interactions in class.

Additionally, Neri et al. (2019) discussed how culturally relevant educational approaches are still not too common. Their study found that the reason is a lack of understanding and belief

and lack of know-how to execute it. Sometimes the fear of the unknown or simply not getting out of their comfort zone are factors that may affect teachers in CRP implementation. Gay (2002) focused on culturally responsive teaching, and Ladson-Billings (1995) focused on culturally relevant pedagogy; one centers on the methods and the other on the attitudes and disposition. Both share the focus on social justice and doing what is best for minority students. Neri et al. (2019) stated,

> Teachers have a responsibility to make sense of a plethora of often short-lived and conflicting interventions, prioritizing those that improve teaching and learning and resisting those that do not. How and why teachers decide to adopt or resist a proposed change is contingent upon a complex system of beliefs, knowledge, and know-how. (p. 199)

The culturally relevant pedagogy framework explains a critical component: the importance of teachers becoming familiar with their students' backgrounds to connect what they know with the practices used at school. This has a significant impact in helping minority students connect with the curriculum (Gay, 2018). It is essential to include authentic activities like writing a letter expressing how they feel about specific topics with suggested solutions to issues affecting the student's community. This example allows students to become active agents of change because their voice is expressed and valued.

Duncan-Andrade (2016) pointed out that cultural responsibility requires academic rigor—the two go hand-in-hand. He explained that by honoring the research work of Ladson-Billings, Nieto, Banks, and Noguera, we must consider the importance of keeping the door open to use mandated textbooks and use it with spaces to critique that includes community responsiveness. He further points to the differences between schooling and education. The first

uses a process of institutionalization to compel people to accept their social station while the latter teaches them to exercise their own power to transform society and their place within it (Duncan-Andrade, 2016). The paradigm shift includes engaging students in processes that create strong roots, that understand students' culture as an essential role in education.

Ladson-Billings (2006) explained "Everybody keeps telling us about multicultural education, but nobody is telling us how to do it!" (p. 39). There must be an alignment between what teachers know, the opportunities to learn and implement CRP not as a prescribed practice but as an individualized one, with frequent opportunities to follow up to discuss, ask questions, and continue the support to reduce dissonance. A mismatch between teachers' knowledge of CRP, not receiving enough training, and perceptions of not valuing race and culture can create an unbalance in providing practical lessons for emergent bilinguals.

In the literature discussed so far, we can see that knowledge or lack of it can affect teacher's practice. Increasing the opportunities for teachers to engage in CRP is critical. Schools must create the space for them to receive training, collaborate with others, share learning experiences and establish a system that includes all students. The trainings should demonstrate how to do it, allow the time for teachers to practice, engage in deeper conversations to find similarities, discuss challenges and to answer their questions will be the foundation of effective implementation while focusing on students learning needs. Creating a community of learners that engages in critical reflection and honors cultural practices will impact students learning.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a literature review from researchers which demonstrates the need and relevance for my study. Drawing from the pedagogical approaches, the findings emphasize the changes and challenges in teachers' delivery of virtual lessons during the COVID-

19 pandemic. The literature highlighted how culturally relevant pedagogy has a positive impact in academic growth for emergent bilinguals. The discussion of culturally relevant, culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies provided a strong framework that helps conceptualize the importance of the study. The practices will not happen alone, the mandated curriculum still has an important role in teaching but, integrating meaningful activities that validates students' funds of knowledge and values their identity increases their chances of success during online learning. Furthermore, teaching online was discussed as a relevant topic how we are now providing support to emergent bilinguals and its implications. I concluded this chapter by describing how teachers' knowledge on CRP can impact their practice. This chapter justified the need to conduct a qualitative case study to further develop an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy practices occurring in online environments and to explore the basline knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy by a typical teacher in this district.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative case study aimed to better understand how culturally relevant pedagogy is implemented in online environments in a DL early childhood classroom and what a teacher's CRP knowledge is as it relates to her practice. Using a qualitative approach, I carefully examined these questions by observing a one-way dual-language classroom using English and Spanish as the languages of instruction. My focus will be on two academic subjects: math (taught in English) and language arts (taught in Spanish).

A qualitative research design allows the researcher to observe teachers and students in their natural online teaching environment. Gay et al. (2012) explained, "qualitative research is a collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (p. 7). This methodology is the most appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination that includes a thick description of the phenomenon. It also facilitated careful observations of a teacher in an online classroom setting. Gay et al. stated, "a case study researcher may specifically choose a particular instance of a phenomenon under investigation to understand a specific problem that occurs in everyday practice" (p. 445). Online Zoom videos allowed me entrance to an authentic setting and provided me with an accurate picture of the events. Zoom is a cloud video tool used to meet with others virtually using the internet and a webcam. I have chosen to investigate the phenomenon of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in online environments since it is important

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for emergent bilinguals because it should create a link between their culture and what they are learning at school which supports academic achievement. Culturally relevant pedagogy evaluates practices that foster academic achievement, cultural competency, and sociopolitical consciousness for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Fostering an environment that promotes these factors is critically important for English learners, also known as emergent bilinguals. García et al. mentioned,

> English language learners are in fact emergent bilinguals. That is, through school and through acquiring English, these children become bilingual, able to continue to function in their home language as well as in English, their new language and that of school. (2008, p. 6)

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study explored characteristics that promote culturally relevant pedagogy in an online scenario in a one-way dual-language class. The focus is on elements that foster academic achievement which include language, cultural competency, and sociopolitical consciousness as critical components that sustain high levels of academic achievement for emergent bilinguals. By researching these elements, this investigation looked closely at what teachers do during remote learning to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy in the learning process to develop academic skills in emergent bilinguals. I chose an early childhood dual-language teacher because of the impact a strong academic foundation exerts throughout one's academic experience. Early childhood programs are offer to improve the outcomes for young children in schools. Teachers of young children in lower grades are responsible for establishing that critical foundation and must now do so in an online environment.

Theoretical Framework

I chose culturally relevant pedagogy as the theoretical framework for the study because its structural foundations empower good teaching with high academic expectations (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Linton, 2017; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2017). Culturally relevant pedagogy refers to a practice that draws from the knowledge of the students and their cultural background (Gay, 2010). It can also effectively reveal institutionalized racist practices which have historically oppressed minority students and have many times gone unnoticed (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The initial focus of this study is on how the participant delivers online lessons in an early childhood one-way dual-language classroom, integrating culturally relevant pedagogy in her teaching, while using both languages. A one-way program refers to a bilingual program in which students that speak Spanish are taught in their language and in English to become bilingual. This lens defined elements that help emergent bilinguals achieve high academic performance in an online scenario. Second, I explored what knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy the early childhood dual-language teacher has as it relates to her practice.

Case Study Research

I have chosen to use a case study methodology for this research to investigate the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy in online instruction in a one-way dual-language classroom. Case study allows you to focus in-depth on a single case while simultaneously retaining a holistic, real-world perspective (Yin, 2018). This methodology allowed me to carefully explore and describe how culturally relevant pedagogy was sustained—or not—in online dual-language lessons. Investigating real-life events while retaining meaningful and holistic characteristics enables researchers to understand socially complex phenomena (Yin, 2009). In this case study, I identified characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy and their

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frequency of use in online dual-language classes. My case study was based on a single case of a bilingual certified teacher working in a public-school district dual-language program. I explored two subjects, math and language arts, to identify instructional patterns across dual-language instruction, focused on culturally relevant pedagogy.

Research Questions

Yin (2009) explained two of the most important parts of a research study are defining the questions for the research and the need to be patient and allow time for these to develop and evolve, as part of the research topic statement. The following questions guided this study:

- RQ1   To what extent were culturally relevant pedagogical practices happening in an early dual-language childhood classroom?

- RQ2   What is the level of an early childhood bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy?

Participant Selection

The main participant for this study was a teacher delivering online lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher was chosen from a convenience sample of early childhood dual-language teachers at an elementary campus in a district that routinely records and collects online Zoom lessons. I worked with the bilingual director in this district to obtain access to recordings of online Zoom sessions and follow district's research protocols.

The final selection was criteria-based (Patton, 2002) and included the following factors. The teacher:

- participates in an early childhood dual-language program,

- have at least 3 years of experience in the program,

- is bilingual certified and will have received district professional development on the dual-language components that align with the adopted 50/50 language framework—50% taught in their native language and 50% taught using a second language—and

- use a hybrid model that included online lessons.

Emphasis was placed on documenting the teacher's delivery of lessons and students' engagement during virtual learning.

Following the instructions of the university's IRB process and the district, I proceed with the protocol of inviting the participant. Once the district authorized access to Zoom lessons, I asked the teacher to sign a consent form for participation that was sent via email. I gave the participant a week to return it signed and dated, which she did. I reassured her that her confidentiality was going to be protected. The permission form contained information on the duration of study, observation protocols for Zoom video recordings, and participation in one interview.

Participant Description

The participant was a certified first grade bilingual teacher currently teaching in a lower grade one-way dual-language program with at least 3 years of experience. The lower level grades range from PK through second grade. This was crucial in order to observe strategies used by a bilingual teacher delivering online lessons in math in English and Spanish language arts. The teacher also participates in a 50/50 dual-language model program.

Research Setting and Context

The study took place in a lower grade one-way dual language classroom in a South Texas town located on the Mexico border. For the purposes of this study, the school is known by a pseudonym, Vargas Elementary. All elementary grades from pre-kindergarten through fifth

grade are conducted at the school. It is important to note that the researcher is familiar with Vargas Elementary. Gay et al. explained,

> One reason qualitative researchers spend time in the research setting before selecting a sample is to observe and obtain information that can be used to select participants whom they judge to be thoughtful, informative, articulate, and experienced with the research topic and setting. (2012, p. 142)

The district implements a 50/50 dual language (English and Spanish) bilingual program. The language of instruction changes depending on the subject. English is used to teach math and Spanish is used for language arts, science, and social studies. I observed five Zoom language arts lessons in Spanish and five math lessons conducted in English, which have already been collected by the district.

The district's student population is about 3,000 learners, 98% of whom are Latino/a. Approximately 74.5% of the students are considered at-risk students. An at-risk student refers to students that did not perform satisfactory on districts' readiness assessment during the school year. Students from low-income families constitute 89% of the student body, and 70% of the students are considered emergent bilinguals. The student teacher ratio is 13:1, and almost all (99%) of the faculty are certified bilingual teachers, most of whom (87%) have three or more years of experience. Students' academic progress averages 67%, significantly higher than the state level of 43%.

Description of the Context

This suburban school district provides equity for students by implementing additive dual-language programs. Due to the proximity of the school district to the Mexican border, most of the students come from Spanish speaking families. Some students cross the border every day to

attend schools in U.S. territory. For this reason, the use of cross-cultural communication is essential to foster students' cultural competence in ways that connect home and school lives. When students cross the border, they continue to use the same language and customs—in other words, they do not switch from one set of customs to another depending on their geographic location. Therefore, it is crucial to examine and understand the practices that include culturally relevant pedagogies.

This research provided the opportunity to observe the new normal for the online delivery of lessons during a pandemic. The opportunity to observe Zoom lessons can demonstrate what practices are currently used for the academic development of all emergent bilinguals in lower grades in a one-way dual-language classroom. Dual-language one-way is a bilingual/biliteracy program model in which students identified as emergent bilinguals and are served in both English and another language. Lower grades in elementary schools are considered the grades between PK and second grade.

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Data Sources

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My data collection included multiple sources of data to support interpretations. Yin (2018) described data triangulation as collecting information from multiple sources to support the data and corroborate the findings. The primary data source was classroom observations of Zoom lessons. The secondary data sources for this study were field notes, lesson plans, and one interview with the participant teacher. These sources provided me with further insight into how culturally relevant pedagogy was used in online environments.

The purpose of using Zoom lessons was to gain insight into how culturally relevant pedagogy was implemented during online learning in a dual-language classroom. These lessons allowed me to understand the natural environment and lived experiences of participants in an

online lesson environment. The observation focused on what strategies the teacher uses to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in online lessons using a CRP rubric. The CRP rubric that included five criteria components: (a) incorporation of real-life connections, (b) the use of native language, (c) space for social justice, (d) the developing and sustainability of cultural identity, and I the inclusion of culturally relevant resources. As I watched the lessons, I recorded field notes that provided me with robust information on specific instances of culturally relevant pedagogy during classroom observations. Field notes described the research setting and behaviors among participants related to culturally relevant pedagogy. Gay et al. (2012) mentioned, "field notes describe, as accurately and as comprehensively as possible, all relevant aspects of the situation" (p. 382). I included many details, and document specific locations on the recordings that are pertinent to emergent analysis.

Moreover, I used lesson plans as artifacts, to identify potential trends and review the use of culturally relevant pedagogical methodology. The lesson plans reviews were important because demonstrate intentionality on the teacher's part to build academic and cultural skills in the delivery of the lesson by using activities that specifically help students affirm their cultural history and reveal how the teacher addresses equity for all groups. That intentionality must be documented in the lessons in order to happen.

The interview represented another strategy for data collection. As Yin (2018) mentioned, "one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview" (p. 106). I conducted a teacher-focused interview to discuss (a) instructional strategies, (b) detailed information that may not be obvious in the Zoom lessons, and (c) any other insights the participant wanted to share. The interview was semi-structured that used a combination of intentional pre-determined questions and a few unstructured follow-up questions to encourage

free-flow reflections during the interview. Rubin and Rubin (1995, as cited in Yin, 2009) referred to the interview process as something fluid rather than rigid. During the interview, I asked questions to explore what was the early childhood bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy and their resulting impact. The interview was intended to reveal the teacher's perspective and knowledge about culturally relevant pedagogy. Each of the data sources was linked to the research questions.

Data Analysis

I observed and analyzed Zoom lessons using a culturally relevant pedagogical rubric (adapted from the CRDC math task rubric; Keazer & Jones, 2017; see Appendix A) to explore whether or not concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy were implemented. Keazer and Jones' original rubric was based on Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy framework and addresses the three tenets of (a) the ability to develop students academically, (b) willingness to nurture, and support cultural competence, and (c) the development of sociopolitical consciousness. Categories in the CRP rubric for this study include the areas of real-life connections, the use of native language, the accessibility to culturally relevant resources, a justice space for students to reflect on the lessons, and a structure that enables students to develop and sustain their identities.

The scoring scale in the rubric used explored the practices in the Zoom lessons. The degree of structure in the rubric included categories of high, moderate, and low. At the low level, it refers to if the teacher uses practices less than 5 times during the week observed. If students try to connect and understand concepts without engaging opportunities, the discussion process to make connections to their culture it is difficult. The medium level uses a range between ten to five times of the criteria observed in a week. At this level, the classroom discourse is becoming

more fluid throughout the lesson, and students have more than one opportunity to engage in CRP practices; however, the criteria observed may fall into a moderate degree If the practice is not observed with consistency. The criteria used for high performance indicates if the teacher consistently and clearly drew upon culturally relevant pedagogy to help students analyze and evaluate topics to help them make connections with a degree of usage more than twenty times. At this higher level, ongoing interactions among the teacher and students encourage more discussion and foster connections with their students. This fully developed high level usually begins with the teacher modeling how to make culturally relevant connections by explaining how the concept is relevant to culture and experiences, especially real-life, then engages in this practice with consistency. This interactive process helps students relate learning to previous experiences, allowing them to draw from relevant cultural knowledge and empowering them to ask questions about the information presented and its relation to their background, community, and world. The levels in the rubric were measured by the frequency of authentic opportunities for students to reflect and engage throughout the entire lessons during the week in math and language arts Zoom lessons. The rubric was used to observe the lessons in a week timeframe for both subjects, and the researcher added tally marks reflecting the occurrence of each of the criteria observed. Then, I compiled the total to select a degree of structure. The rubric helped me categorize and find the frequency of implementation of the CPR components and identify patterns.

Field notes were taken in a notebook with information from the Zoom observations. A think description of examples observed during the Zoom observations were included in the field notes. The field notes provided information in regards to teacher interaction with students, her

teaching style, and the student's engagement with the lessons. The data from field notes was also color-coded, sorted, and analyzed similarly to the data from the interview.

The information from the interview was transcribed and coded so that recurrent characteristics associated with culturally relevant pedagogy could be identified and assessed. Saldaña stated that coding is "a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or 'families' because they share some characteristics—the beginning of a pattern" (2009, p. 8). Significant words and phrases related to CRP were identified during the interview and reviewed based on CRP common themes such as language, engagement, family and culture. I highlighted with different colors words and phrases in the interview transcripts. Recurrent themes were reviewed to identify and describe CRP practices from the perspective and knowledge of the participant. The coding was developed by establishing the frequency of words related to CRP. Phrases from the interview were put together to reveal categories then put into coding forms to facilitate data reduction and aggregation of emergent categories of relevant information. This process separated, sorted, and synthesized the data. I used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to associate and relate to the categories then linked the results and themes generated by the interview. The results facilitated drawing connections between the transcripts from the interview about CRP and the three main tenets of the framework.

Lesson plans were compared to the three tenets of CRP. The descriptive information in lesson plans such as verbs and objectives were analyzed by identifying whether and how the lesson's activities established a space for culturally relevant practices to increase student engagement. Howard (2001) explained how significant it is for students to feel appreciated and respected, and this happens more easily when the classroom environment includes established routines and rituals that make students feel welcomed (Howard, 2003, p 141). The idea to

include these spaces in lesson plans is to help students share their voice, relate to previous experiences providing opportunities for student's academic success.

The triangulation of the data using instruments such as the lesson plans, field notes, frequency of rubric, and the interview in this study, were used to collect information aligned to the research questions. Yin (2009) stated, "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to draw empirically-based conclusions" (p. 126). All the different methods to analyze the data were applied to explore the inclusion of CRP in virtual learning.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research serves a similar purpose as validity and reliability in quantitative research. The terms credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were used by Guba and Lincoln (1981) to explain trustworthiness in qualitative research. To produce solid research, I must consider these four elements with well-defined procedures to ensure each factor is adequately addressed.

Credibility

Gay et al. (2012) described credibility as, "The researcher's ability to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (p. 393). In other words, credibility refers to the accuracy of the study and answers the question, how well does this study represent the experiences of the participants. Several components of qualitative research can be used to enhance credibility such as triangulation, thick description, member checks, and the researcher's own experiences.

In this study, triangulation of multiple data sources will be used to cross-check information and validate conclusions. Successfully using triangulation in a qualitative study

requires a well-defined data collection plan which functions as a map to not only keep the researcher on track. Identifying data sources that can support triangulation before the study begins ensures data pertinent to the study are not overlooked. Triangulation in this study is supported by pre-recorded Zoom lessons, lesson plans, and at least one interview with the teacher.

Secondly, my field notes included a thick description of the Zoom observations which in turn, made it possible to develop a deeper sense of understanding. Holloway said,

> a thick description builds up a clear picture of the individuals and groups in the context of their culture and the setting in which they live…thick description can be contrasted with thin description, which is a superficial account and does not explore the underlying meanings of cultural members. (1997, p. 154)

The field notes described and captured what was happening in the classroom and increased exactness and precise interpretation. As a non-participant observer, I assert the observations were conducted without participating in the actual instruction; observing recorded classes allowed me to review the information as often as necessary.

Transferability

Transferability alludes to the capacity to apply the research process in other settings, with other participants, even perhaps using other methods (Shenton, 2004). Gay et al. (2012) stated transferability refers to describing information with many details to help the reader identify with the setting and transfer evidence to another context. Providing a detailed description of the research design, data collection plan, and analysis improves the likelihood and potential success of transferring the structure of this examination of how culturally relevant pedagogy is implemented in online scenarios to other research studies.

Dependability

Dependability was established by carefully documenting research procedures. Some techniques that improve dependability included accurate and complete transcripts, clearly aligning the methodology and design with the problem statement and research questions, and maintaining detailed records of the analysis. To establish dependability, I analyzed the CRP rubric frequency information, transcribed the interview and analyzed the data, and analyzed the use of CRP in the lesson plans based on the three tenets. This creates an overlapping process which confirms observations are supported by data from lesson videos and plans. Further, this process also presented an opportunity to identify evidence that may not fit emerging patterns and which may need alternate explanations to make sense.

Second, my goal was to align the research questions, the methodology, and the research design to very specifically address the current knowledge gap. The clearly defined study design mentioned previously contributed to dependability by focusing the research questions, data collection, and analysis on the gap in extant research.

Third, dependability was enhanced by providing an in-depth methodological description and implementing tools to document all the research process details (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, each data collection process was detailed; details of data collection facilitated the reproduction of this study based on the in-depth methodology used. During the study, multiple data sources were utilized to confirm convergence of emerging themes.

Confirmability

Establishing confirmability ensures research results are not influenced by researcher-bias; instead, findings objectively reflect the participant's experience (Shenton, 2004). According to Gay (2012), confirmability is enhanced by maintaining a neutral attitude toward the data.

Techniques that can improve confirmability include taking field notes immediately following an observation and after the interview. By recording the researcher's own reactions to the data, situations that are susceptible to being interpreted in light of preconceived opinions or biases are more easily identified.

It was important to acknowledge my own beliefs and assumptions in order to minimize the possibility my position could influence my findings. My awareness of my positionality increased my ability to be vigilant as I engaged in an ongoing process of observation, analysis, reflection, and interpretation. In addition, I continually reflected on my personal interpretation of the data and reviewed the coding scheme to ensure my interpretation of the observations and teacher's responses were accurate and reported clearly and concisely. The following section clearly presents my positionality relative to the unique needs of emergent bilinguals in online learning environments.

Researcher Position Statement

Delgado Bernal (1998) referred to Strauss and Corbin when she wrote, "The more professional experience, the richer the knowledge base and insight available to draw upon in the research" (p. 556). I position myself within the dimensions of the study as a former English learner and an experienced bilingual/ESL teacher and administrator. I have worked in the field as an early childhood teacher for 17 years and as an administrator for 8 years. I have conducted many dual-language classroom walkthroughs. Because I understand the process of acquiring a second language, I understand how to develop strong relations with bilingual teachers. By using a culturally relevant pedagogical lens to assess an online dual-language classroom, I aim to unearth how tenets of this pedagogy are implemented in online environments and how the

teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant aspects impacts their practice. This understanding will be accomplished by using different data sources and thoroughly analyzing the data.

Summary

The goal for chapter III was to outline the research method used to answer the study questions. I elaborated on the research steps to investigate how culturally relevant pedagogy was implemented during online learning in an early childhood dual-language classroom. I discussed the procedure, the study participant, data collection, and the research questions with specific information on how the study was conducted.

It is essential to understand the teacher's level of knowledge about culturally relevant pedagogy to explore what is happening in a virtual scenario. The rubric helped me gain insight into what practices are used in online lessons in different languages to support emergent bilinguals' academic growth as well as how they incorporate activities that help students make connections between the lesson and their culture. The study took place in an elementary dual language public-school district in South Texas. The teacher was chosen from a purposeful sample consisting of early childhood dual language teachers. Data collection included Zoom lessons, field notes, lesson plans, and a semi-structured interview.

As we continue moving forward with online delivery of lessons, it is essential to understand the teacher's role in supporting culturally relevant pedagogy to help students make meaningful connections between home and school. One of my goals is to continue exploring this field related to current practices in dual language classrooms. Firmly grounded in the culturally relevant pedagogical work of Ladson-Billings (1995) and the importance of academic achievement valuing diverse students' cultural identities in critical ways, I hope to provide a

context to continue reflecting on the online lessons provided to our emergent bilinguals and open a professional dialogue analyzing teaching practices and validating students' identities.

The purpose of Chapter IV is to provide results from the study and demonstrate that the methodology described in chapter III was followed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The focus of this research was to (a) use a natural environment to explore whether CRP was being used in an early childhood dual language classroom delivering online lessons through Zoom, and (b) investigate the teacher's knowledge and understanding of CRP. This chapter presents the crucial points that were revealed during class observations and the interview with the teacher.

The research questions which guided this study were:

RQ1: To what extend were culturally relevant pedagogical practices happening in an early childhood dual-language classroom?

RQ2: What is the level of an early childhood bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy?

The ability to review videotaped lessons in this single case study facilitated the observation of CRP implementation methods by exploring if CRP was used in a dual-language early childhood classroom where online instruction is delivered. The district had collected videos during the 2020–21 school year in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the videos were repeatedly reviewed, the CRP rubric (see Appendix A) was used to identify authentic opportunities to engage and evaluate whether CRP elements represented a high, moderate, or low degree of structure. The rubric enabled the researcher to keep a tally of the times each criteria

was observed in the Zoom lessons. I observed the lessons throughout the week and was adding marks reflecting the occurrence of each of the criteria observed. Then, compiled the total for the week to select a degree of structure. Under the high degree of structure in the rubric, the observations revealed a total of 20 or more tallies indicating a high degree for the use of native language and connections with real-life. As I observed the lessons, I kept track of the frequency of occurrence for each of the criteria observed in the lessons. Then, I computed totals for the week of lessons to identify the degree of structure. The criteria of cultural resources and developing and supporting students' identities both scored under a moderate degree of structure. The social justice criteria, with less than ten tally marks, scored the lowest. This critical space was not included in lesson plans and, as a consequence, did not happen with consistency. I looked for written teaching practices that allowed students to authentically engage with the lessons, had a space for critical thinking. I analyzed the lesson plans based on Ladson-Billings CRP tenets: a) Academic Success, b) Cultural Competence and b) Critical (sociopolitical) Consciousness. As I read the lessons, I looked for evidence of activities that explicitly included activities that activated students' FoK, allowed them to critically analyze a theme or topic, and directly linked the students' culture. The discussion describes how I connected the observations and the interview to the research questions.

Research Question One

The researcher explored to what extend the frequency of CRP practices were happening during online learning in a early childhood DL classroom in question one. As previously mentioned, a CRP rubric (Appendix A) was used to tally the frequency of each criteria observed. The following information is based on exploring CRP practices in Zoom lessons using a CRP rubric that included five criteria components : (a) incorporation of real-life connections, (b) the

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use of native language, (c) space for social justice, (d) the developing and sustainability of cultural identity, and I the inclusion of culturally relevant resources. All students in the classroom were emergent bilingual Spanish speakers. Five 45-minute classes were observed for both English math and Spanish language arts lessons delivered virtually via Zoom. During the math lessons, the skill being taught that week was measurement. In contrast, the Spanish language arts lessons focused on various reading skills such as learning how to identify the main idea, poetry elements, context clues, or retelling a story. In this online scenario, all students participated using their computer camera; they unmuted their microphones and responded to signals when the teacher asked them to in order to check comprehension. During the math lessons, the teacher imparted content information via lecture, she engaged in demonstrations, played videos, and sang songs to help students understand concepts since the language of instruction was English. Students mostly participated by listening, taking notes, and answering questions. For the language arts lessons, which contained culturally relevant components, students participated with more frequency using their native language because the language of instruction was Spanish. This chapter includes the information observed with examples for each category from the CRP rubric.

Use of Native Language

The rubric calls for maximizing students' opportunities to use their native language during instruction. In fact, Spanish was used in all lessons. The teacher allowed students to speak Spanish during all lessons which placed the criteria in the high degree of structure with tally marks above 20. At the beginning of all lessons, the teacher asked her students in their native language, how they were…how they felt; then quickly moved to the language of instruction. In all lessons, parents sitting next to some students; sometimes siblings were present in the back of

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the room, all speaking Spanish. Occasionally, parents directly asked the teacher questions in Spanish. She answered them in Spanish but consistently used the appropriate language of instruction with students to teach each subject. She used a HoverCam® to demonstrate what she was doing and every now and then she had to redirect distracted students—much like a face-to-face setting. For the most part, she led the lessons, and students followed her instructions.

During the English math lessons, even though the teacher stayed with fidelity in the language of instruction, she allowed students to respond to questions and engage speaking in Spanish. However, when this happened, she repeated their responses in English to stay consistent and model English vocabulary. Students often repeated a couple of the words she used in English; others spoke in Spanish. Since students were working from home, she asked them to use a paperclip to measure objects during the measuring unit. She also allowed them to substitute a different measuring tool if they did not have a paper clip available, as long as they wrote down the object they used on their worksheets, which were delivered as part of their homework.

The teacher asked in English, "If you are going to measure a book at home, but you do not have a ruler, what can you do? What can you use to measure it? One student answered "mi mano" another answered, "un cinto." The teacher praised the students for their Spanish answers. "OK, those are good suggestions," she responded in English. She affirmed students could use artifacts from home to measure different objects when they responded. Some students spoke Spanish to their parents or siblings as they participated in the Zoom lessons. The teacher kindly asked them in English to pay attention, and not speak to anyone while she was explaining. A student answered "Sí, maestra, yo presto atención." Another student said, "Teacher, I like math, I like numbers." She praised him by saying "Good, I like numbers too, it helps me to count, and I use them every day." For the most part, students used Spanish to communicate during the math

lessons. The students made decisions independently regarding how to measure things at home. The teacher asked them to explain, "Please tell me how you measured your notebook?" A couple of students answered in Spanish, and she accepted their answers. A few students used a combination of Spanish and English words when answering. She proceeded to explain the difference between estimating and measuring with a measuring tool. During the lessons, because the teacher was teaching in English, she explained the concepts in different ways, she used pictures and the word wall in English (the word wall uses pictures to explain the word). She also used cognates and explained, "Students, we will estimate the length of the notebook; the word estimate is on our cognates word wall; how do you say it in Spanish?" She called on a student. "Estimar," he answered (he could see the anchor chart on the computer). She proceeded to read a couple of words from the cognates anchor chart "We may use words like difference/diferencia, rectangle/retángulo, separate/separar, order/orden, estimate/estimar. This wall helps us to see words that are similar in English and Spanish," she explained. During the math lessons, she imparted information from the curriculum via videos, visual presentations, word walls, and demonstrations allowing students to use their native language to participate and engage with the lessons.

For the Spanish language arts lessons, the language of instruction was Spanish. Similar practices were observed, as the teacher modeled many of the activities and students responded, copied information, and listened to read alouds. Even though the stories were in Spanish, the teacher showed pictures with some of the academic vocabulary. For example, the teacher read a page and pointed out the word "cachivaches." She asked students "¿alguien sabe lo que esto significa?" All students answered no. This example showed the teacher used Spanish words; however, students sometimes did not understand the vocabulary, even in Spanish. Karina

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proceeded to help students using context clues with pictures. In this example, she pointed at things in the room that people do not use frequently. She asked "algunos de ustedes o su familia tienen cosas en su casa que no usan mucho? ¿Quién me quiere decir?" A couple of students answered in Spanish. Then she guided them to understand the definition with the examples they used. A student commented, "miss, yo creo que es de una chiva." They all laughed, and the teacher pointed out that the word has the word "chiva" in it, but in this context, it was not part of the definition. She created a foundation in her instructional practice that demonstrated it was OK to ask questions in Spanish as she empowered them to participate using their native language. It was apparent that some parts of the Spanish curriculum could be rigorous due to academic language, but students engaged with the lesson when the teacher used visuals and unpacked the information to help them engage.

Connections With Real-Life

In the rubric, connection with real-life experiences calls for teachers to make connections to the students' lives in order to engage them academically while learning in meaningful ways. Funds of knowledge involves taking in consideration the students' life experiences and use these experiences to help make connections with classroom content. This was observed with a high degree of structure with tally marks above 20 times. This requires teachers to understand the importance of the students' funds of knowledge and helps students engage with the lesson by giving them opportunities to interact. In the previous language arts example using the word "cachivaches," she asked students to give examples of things they do not use much. ¿Cómo hacen en sus casas para recoger o tirar los cachivaches? ¿Algunos de ustedes reciclan en sus casas? She allowed them to make connections with the academic vocabulary using real-life examples. The teacher also asked students to insert worksheets into their journals and invited

parents to respond to the two questions and share in class. This was an opportunity to share real-life information and promote students' cultural identities in classroom instruction because they included their parents in the process. When parents are involved in the process of explaining some of the house

During math lessons, the teacher shared stories related to estimating measurement. One story was about a king estimating the length of a bed he wanted and explaining how he wanted his worker to estimate. The teacher showed a couple of YouTube® videos demonstrating different stories related to measurement. At the beginning of the lessons, she asked students if they ever use a ruler at home to measure things—some students answered yes; others stayed quiet. She mentioned how they have been using paper clips to measure things and asked them if they would use a paperclip to measure their bed. The students all answered no. "Están muy chiquitos maestra y mi cama esta grande," a student answered. The teacher encouraged students to think critically by asking what they would do if they did not have a ruler to measure. She helped students solve problems by offering a different perspective to generate solutions to problems, helping them authentically engage with academic skills and make connections with real-life scenarios. Another day, she showed a video with a pencil someone had tried to measure with paperclips, but the paper clips had been placed incorrectly. She asked the students, "What happened? Did she measure the pencil right?" Students answered, "Nooooo, está poniendo los paper clips uno arriba del otro." The teacher answered, "Yes, you are not supposed to overlap." Then the teacher asked students to look for a small item at home like a book or pen to measure and to show her how they would measure it. I observed one student did not have paperclips so he used a small toy car. The rubric to observe the lessons called for the implementation of real-life connections and use of native language which was part of this lessons.

In a later lesson, while the teacher showed a measuring video, she asked students to think about their mother's shoes. She asked, "Have you ever seen your mother's shoes? How long are they?" She asked them to reflect on what the video discussed regarding length by relating the skill to their mothers' shoes. Since the video showed a king in a palace and how he measured things, the teacher allowed students to connect the lesson with something practical like a shoe. One student looked down at his mother's shoes. Another student responded "Miss, mi 63ama tiene una chancla no zapatos. ¿Está bien?" The teacher answered "Yes, it is OK, you can also look at that." She said for homework, I want you to use a shoe to measure big things like a bed, a refrigerator or anything large, then write it down in your journal to share with the class.

The teacher asked students to find different small/medium objects in their house to measure and share with the class. A student shared, "Miss, yo quiero medir mi Nintendo Switch que me regalaron para Navidad." The teacher repeated in English, "Ok, Sergio wants to measure the Nintendo Switch he received for Christmas, and that is fine." She asked him, "Can you use paper clips to measure it? If so, the small ones or the big ones?" Sergio responded, "Sí, los big ones." Students continued to share with the class the items they were going to measure. Students were allowed to select things they may use every day at home to practice the skill.

During a language arts block, the teacher read aloud a story where the mom was cooking. She opened up the floor by asking her students in Spanish, "¿Han visto a su 63ama alguna vez cocinado?" All students answered, "Sí maestra." Then she said that now that you are spending more time at home, you can see many things your parents and family do during the day, right? A student shared how his mom cooked for an event at their church, and prepared individual goodies for families. Other students engaged in the conversation sharing their personal stories. Another language arts story was related to the soccer theme. This story was very engaging because the

class demonstrated their knowledge by answering or engaging in the lesson and integrated their FoK by asking students about their family outings to the soccer games. In the soccer story they used a timer to measure the team's time to go from one side of the field to the other. A student responded, "maestra, cuando yo juego soccer, yo corro super rápido de un lado al otro, por eso no me agarran." This story opened the door for students to make real-life connections as many of them were familiar with the subject. Another student mentioned "pero maestra ya no podemos ir a jugar con el team, mi mamá dijo quizá el año que viene." The teacher validated the student's answer.

The teacher created frequent opportunities for students to make connections with real-life scenarios every day, using their native language and different themes or items that were related to their home and everyday life. Throughout the week, the lessons' dynamic included validating the current account of family members, characterized by household practices and their experiences to construct sense and meaning using the language they felt most comfortable with.

Cultural Resources

The component of cultural resources in the rubric requires teachers to use tangible tools to create engaging lessons that integrate students and families from diverse backgrounds. In the rubric, she used cultural resources more than ten times in both subjects, which falls in the category of moderate. For example, stories from Latino/a authors related to themes that students are familiar with are important to maximize opportunities for students to participate easily. Much like her students, Karina is Latina and comes from the same geographical area, so she shares many of the same cultural attributes. During language arts, Karina read some culturally relevant books like *El Gusto del Mercado Mexicano*, by Nancy M. Grande that reflected food, activities, and the students' linguistic background. A student responded to one of her questions as a point of

reference to a vegetable that she liked, "Yo, también miss." This commonality opened a space to engage in conversations.

One of the stories referred to a character who loved music. Karina mentioned she loves to listen to songs by Juan Gabriel when she cleans house on Saturdays. A student answered, "mi 65ama le gusta él 65ama65en." She connected the lessons with cultural resources such as songs and aligned them with the students' Hispanic customs by structuring conversations emphasizing shared similarities. During this lesson, some students shared the names of the songs they liked. She praised them for sharing and asked students to ask their parents the title of their favorite song, write one line of the song and add it to their journal to share on Friday. She pointed out that sometimes many of the words in songs rhyme in English and Spanish. Many students smiled and were excited about homework.

During both math and language arts observations, the teacher included some culturally relevant resources—things such as personal narratives, books in Spanish, songs, and artifacts—to make connections. Many of the stories she used were part of the district's adopted textbooks, including Spanish books from authentic Latino/a authors. During language arts, when she used videos, she used a pre-made package with Elementos de la Poesía, along with a book called Frutas Tropicales. She highlighted words in Spanish from the workbook, read them aloud, and explained what they meant. She used many hand gestures to demonstrate ritmo, aliteración, and other concepts. She asked students, "¿Qué fruta es esta?" and pointed to a picture. A student answered "Es una papaya." She said, "Sí, la han visto antes en los supermercados, ¿verdad?" Students answered, "Sí, maestra y a mí me gusta con chile." Since the book was in Spanish, students participated more in the lessons, validating the information the teacher read. Students made connections with the information read and some cultural attributes like using chile.

The teacher used culturally relevant practices by employing reflection alongside skills, for example, "palabras descriptivas." Songs, food and sports, and other related things to their Hispanic culture contributed to students sharing their personal experiences during some stories. She tried to balance English math lessons with real-life situations that included personal narratives because the resources were in English—not their native language, Spanish, or from Latino/a authors. For example, she said that when her parents first came to the United States, they had to learn different words related to measurement because, in Mexico, they used other words. She pointed out that they were going to learn measurement units from the U. S.

She listed the titles of all the Spanish books she would use during the week in her lesson plans. She had at least one or more books in Spanish for all the language arts lessons; that was not the case for math in English, as she only listed three that she used as a supplement. Sometimes she shared personal stories to connect English lessons with cultural aspects to help students understand since there were no books.

She frequently allowed students to use cultural artifacts such as pictures, or show items from the kitchen, clothing, toys, etc., and write stories in their journals to share in class later. She also allowed students to use self-drawn pictures to explain concepts, encouraging them to interact with their environment, family, and language. In general, she tried to integrate some culturally relevant resources by pointing out similarities and differences and relating some of the material to the students' lives.

Social Justice Space

In the rubric, a social justice aspect refers to a space that allows students to critically reflect on the information presented. It shifts the focus from skills acquisition to promote equity and opportunities for students to reflect on their place in society. A social justice space in this

classroom was a practice that sometimes-allowed students to reflect and think about themselves. The criteria ranked in the low category as the lesson allowed students to think critically but were not observed consistently, it had less than 10 tally marks in both subjects. For young students, the teacher sometimes asked a simple question such as "does it make you feel happy or not, why?"—this question allowed for an open dialogue. During a conversation with students, the teacher sometimes shared common beliefs about her community with her students, like she reminded them of the book about El Mercado and asked how they get access to more large grocery stores in the area because have to travel far; she mentioned to her students that maybe they need to write a letter for companies to open more stores close by. She also shared comments of attending Ferias in the 67ama, she asked students "se acuerdan cuando hicimos la feria del libro y muchos de ustedes fueron con sus familias y agarraron muchos libros." Many students responded that they remembered because they got a lot of books.

As an early childhood teacher, Karina sometimes encouraged critical thinking by asking students questions that required more than a simple yes or no answer. Sometimes, before introducing a concept, she talked about the learning objective in both subjects and gave students examples of what it meant in an easy-to-understand vocabulary. Take the following statement, for example:

We are talking about measuring things and estimating. I know we have to learn this skill but think about this, why do we need to understand how to measure? Is it important for us to learn to measure, and why? How do you or your parents do it at home? I will give you a few minutes to think and then share with us why and how. Put on your thinking caps.

Karina explained they had to learn about measurement that week but she modified the lesson by allowing students to think critically about it. Because of their young age, the teacher

used simple strategies to demonstrate how the concept was rooted in or connected to their personal lives by asking them to give examples, and she asked them to explain how they or their parents measure things and for them to explain why was it necessary. In response to her preliminary questions about the importance of measuring, a student answered, "Maestra, mi 68ama usa a veces un taza para medir cuando cocina, yo la veo." She knew some students had limited resources at home. She provided, for example, ways to measure and understand the importance of the concept and, in a basic way, asked them to think about what they had, make connections, and explain. During one of her reading lessons, for example, when she read El Joven Frank Arquitecto, a realistic fiction story, she pointed out that once the boy understood the story explained things incorrectly, he no longer wanted to be an architect. She connected the lesson to how the boy felt and asked students to share examples of how they felt happy with something. For example, a student shared, "maestra, mi abuelo y mi abuela siempre me llevaban a la escuela todos los días y pues ya no." The student looked sad by his expression, and the teacher respectfully thanked the student for sharing a change in his life; then, she pointed out that now they can spend more time with their parents and siblings trying to look for something positive. Students engaged in conversations—some conversations were related to toys, games, homework, or eating particular food in both subject areas. When she read El Joven Frank Arquitecto, she asked them, "¿Cuándo han sentido que les piden que hagan algo, pero después ya no quieren hacerlo?" The teacher facilitated an open dialogue by asking students to critically share comments and exchanging ideas or examples. I did not see anything written in the lesson plans that called for a social justice space reflection.

Develops and Sustains Cultural Identities

The rubric criteria are based on how a teacher validates students' identities, which includes language, and integrates experiences related to their culture. To sustain this practice, it must occur multiple times with consistency across subjects. The ranged observed for this criterion felt in the moderate category with a total of 9 marks. During some lessons, Karina drew from the students' background knowledge by asking them to orally share their traditions—what happens at home. Since they were attending school virtually, it facilitated the bridge between school and home because they could immediately connect both worlds. When the teacher asked questions like "¿Cómo es que ustedes hacen esto en sus casas?" Karina emphasized cultural affirmation by engaging in the same conversations with students "fíjense que en mi casa yo también…" When she engaged in this practice students participated more in the conversations.

The English math lessons involved some problem-solving skills, so she asked them to use materials from home, engaging them in open-ended discussions, and hands-on tasks to generate solutions in an authentic, meaningful way. During online lessons, the students were not able to physically socialize, but Karina sometimes created a space where she affirmed the value of their culture by connecting home and school. For example, she engaged in conversations in Spanish with parents and validated students' answers in the language they felt more comfortable using.

In both English and Spanish lessons, the teacher used her expertise to build relationships with students and explained concepts in a relevant way even when lesson resources were not available in both languages. There was only a homogeneous culture in the classroom—all students were of Mexican descent. To validate their identity, Karina positioned language as an essential part of the learning process even at this early age. Her questions helped students relate to the curriculum to assess content. For example, when she asked in English, "Carlos, explain to

me how in your house your dad knows how to cut the rope he needs to tie something up." By asking questions, she allowed students to process new information with what they already knew, related to their identity. She also modeled a piece of string and a ruler while she asked the question, using visuals to prompt them. Culture passes from generation to generation and the teacher incorporated measuring with daily cooking activities to help students understand. This practice included the students' funds of knowledge as an asset for the lesson instead of a deficit. Questions such as when you do homework, what does your mother asks you to do? Children shared their behavior patterns at home. She consistently and in a friendly, caring way supported students by allowing them to share in their native language. Sofia shared "cuando yo hago la tarea todos los días, mi mama viene después y la mira y la lee conmigo, sino no puedo ir a jugar con mi perro hasta que no termino." She smiled after she finished sharing, she was happy to share in class. The teacher sustained the students' cultural competence by using their first language and asking questions about their cultural practices at home.

Research Question Two—Teacher Knowledge of CRP

These findings are based on a semi-structured interview (see Appendix B) to answer research question two. The interview explored what the participant knew about CRP. The interview included: (a) teacher's background information, (b) motivation to become a teacher, (c) definition of CRP in her own words, (d) information on previous CRP training, I practices used to get to know students, (f) lesson planning for online instruction, (g) integration of culture in lessons, (h) development of socio-political consciousness, (i) information of factors that influence emerging bilingual learning, and (j) funds of knowledge implementation.

The interview was transcribed and her responses were coded as they related to the CRP tenets. During the interview, Karina talked about how her experiences are similar to those of her

students. She immigrated to Texas from Reynosa, Mexico when she was young. The primary language spoken in her home was Spanish. She also knows many of the families because she lives in the same area. Reflecting on her previous experiences, she identified with her students when she said, "I went through the process of not speaking the predominant language at school, which I think helped me understand how students feel. I learned English and kept my native language too because it was what we spoke at home." Her perspective is based on her previous experiences when she first arrived in the United States. The fact that she spoke the same primary language (Spanish) and went through similar experiences relates to the academic achievement and culturally responsive tenets of CRP. When asked, "Tell me what motivated you to become a teacher?" she immediately put a smile on her face and shared that she used to play school with her siblings, beginning at a very young age. She also mentioned she understands her emergent bilinguals because of her own schooling experiences as she was also a native Spanish speaker. Her love for children, teaching others, language, and her strong cultural values inspired her to become a teacher. This year is her sixth-year teaching as a bilingual teacher in the same school.

Karina has not received official CRP training, but when asked what she knew about culturally relevant teaching, she stated she had heard about the topic at some dual-language trainings and pointed out that it has to do with prioritizing students' culture. She was aware that CRP values students' culture, including language. However, the dual-language trainings did not include information on how to implement CRP. In her own words, she answered that culturally relevant teaching is like sharing things with students, making lessons relevant, like things that they both know, including things from home, which is only the surface of CRP.

In regard to lesson planning, she usually plans her lesson with the rest of the team. The district also has created online lessons, and some include translations that adapt to shorter online

sessions by subject area compared to what we they did traditionally. Because she is a dual-language first-grade teacher, she includes resources in Spanish in her lessons. She sometimes mentioned that resources are limited, especially now teaching virtually. She said sometimes she has to create resources or translate some of the activities her colleagues are using, or the content departments are offering for the virtual lessons. Besides what is provided by the district, she uses her talents to add songs, poems, share personal stories, and role-play situations to instruction. She sends home an "All About Me" poster where families add pictures with short blurbs to get to know her students. Parents come to the office to pick up the materials every other week. At the beginning of the school year, she also sends a Spanish questionnaire to families to know more about them. She said that usually, under normal circumstances, she holds parent conferences to get information from parents; on other occasions, she has done home visits but cannot do that anymore. In the past, she also worked with students in small group scenarios because it facilitated the one-on-one engagement to get to know them better. With the online scenarios, she said it is sometimes challenging to keep them engaged. Not all the time, they are actively engaged; if one student answers a question, she piggybacks on that line to ask students similar questions. She said, unfortunately, now they have many distractions at home. She also said that because they are young with a short attention span, it makes it hard to keep them focused on the lessons. In the past, she said she had centers with hands-on activities, and that helped with engagement. Now, there is a lot of technology use, which is fine, but again, the hours required to use technology may be overwhelming for her young students.

I specifically asked her about how she integrates her students' culture into her lessons. She said she uses many examples of things that she does, then asks them questions. She mentioned that she has been collecting books in Spanish-related different units over the years

and tries to integrate them. I asked her a question to know how she challenges students to use their voice, reflect or critique information. The socio-political awareness tenet was addressed when she said she makes content more accessible for her Latino students when she allows them to think critically and make connections with their current customs and situations at home. She said some of her students spend a lot of time with grandparents after school. Grandparents often sit with them to do homework, taking an active role in their grandchildren's education. She also understands that the community they live in influences them. A couple of times, she mentioned that sometimes, for example, she starts conversations using sentence stems and models how the information relates to her—because of her students' young age, they need a lot of modeling and guidance. Then, she creates space for them to think about the skill she is presenting and how the sentence stem applies to them. She mentioned, "I need to provide ways to allow students to engage with the lesson; otherwise, they are just not participating." For her, it is essential to have a school and home connection; for that reason, she role-plays scenarios with her students to actively engage the material. She said sometimes it is challenging to develop the socio-political aspect because the curriculum dictates what to do and how to do it and now, with virtual learning, they have limited time. This is not only convoluted, but given their immature age, they are not aware of bigger political issues—the world still revolves around them.

Recurrent topics that unfolded during the interview were mainly related to language, culture, and adjustment of lessons now virtual. Karina recognized it is more challenging to engage in cooperative learning, such as using bilingual pairs in Zoom lessons—she feels she has to guide them step by step to keep their attention online to cover the mandated curriculum. Bilingual pairs refer to when emergent bilinguals are working with another student in an authentic environment to practice language or practice a skill without the teacher's supervision.

She pointed out that overall, it is more stressful for everyone. She integrates songs to keep them moving and engaged; she wanted to provide positive, emotional, and fun activities to help students because things change every day. She tries to do the best she can with what she currently has. She said that remote learning is just different for everyone; they are not really doing appropriate accommodations like when it was face to face. Many times, they are just engaging in listening and speaking.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions in this study are organized around the research questions. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore if CRP practices were implemented in online dual-language early childhood classrooms and to also explore the bilingual teacher's knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy. This expands on the discussion of findings to include implications of the practice, future research, and the study's limitations. Besides focusing on the CRP framework, this chapter also discusses the significant findings related to the intersectionality of the funds of knowledge, online teaching, and what the teacher knows about CRP. This research is essential because no research has been conducted exploring CRP in online lessons within the context of dual-language programs.

A CRP rubric based on the cultural relevant pedagogy framework (Ladson-Billings, 1995) was used to observe Zoom virtual lessons to answer question one in the study. The rubric followed the CRP theoretical framework that included a threefold focus on (a) students' academic success, (b) developing cultural competence, and (c) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The practices observed during the Zoom lessons showed evidence of some of the components related to the framework. The evidence gathered from the rubric showed a high degree level of a structure under the criteria of using native language to maximize students' opportunities to engage in the virtual lessons and real-life connections that helped students bridge personal experiences with the school.

In this case study, the teacher allowed students to routinely engage in the lessons using their native language to scaffold the instruction. Students often spoke Spanish in class, which the teacher perfectly accepted, creating an environment conducive to learning. Also, when the teacher used real-life connections, it helped students understand the content in a meaningful way and validate their funds of knowledge. Sayer and Braun (2020) pointed out that the transition to virtual learning resulted in a shift in the L2 skills students were regularly practicing. For that reason, it is essential to increase the connection of home and school to avoid teaching in isolation.

A moderate degree level of structure was observed under the criteria of cultural resources and developing and sustaining identities. The framework calls for validating students' culture to increase academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995); this means teachers should use resources that help students become familiar with the skills, making content comprehensible to mirror themselves as part of the learning process. Hefflin (2002) mentioned that using a CRP framework involves call-and-response interaction patterns that help students connect their experiences and literacy skills. In order to consistently support students' identities and have a consistent design in the lessons, a space needs to be created in lesson plans to reach a high level of frequency. This study suggests that there is still a need for culturally relevant resources materials, primarily if the subject is taught in English. To sustain the students' identities with high frequency, the teacher needs to examine how the instructional planning includes a space for students' life experiences outside the classroom, impacting students' learning.

The social justice space was observed with the least frequency during the observations. The tenet of sociopolitical awareness, as Ladson-Billings (1995) established, calls for students to evolve their critical consciousness side through which they challenge the status quo of the

current social order. These transformative practices help students to become agents of change by challenging cultural inequalities advocating for social justice and equality (Oberg De La Garza et al., 2020). One factor that contributed to a low frequency of observation was the students' age. The teacher included some activities that involved critical thinking but because they are very young, they focused more on themselves rather in analyzing their social order.

During the teachers' interview, she shared her background information. She shares many of her students' attributes such as language, culture and the process of becoming bilingual in South Texas. Evidence from this study suggests that while the dual-language early childhood teacher did not receive official CRP training, she was able to provide some basic information based on her teaching styles, background experiences and expectations to teach emergent bilinguals. Dual-language programs are favorable to provide some of the components of CRP because they use the students' native language as an asset focusing on the strengths of the students tapping into their cultural knowledge. The impact on these findings shows that perhaps Latino/a teachers participating in DL programs have a higher level in their ability to implement some components of CRP by developing a relationship with their students based on their own cultural background.

Interpretation of the Findings

The interpretation of the data is aligned to each research question and sustained by the CRP framework and the results of the data. Research question one asked to what extent was culturally relevant pedagogies practices happening in an early childhood dual-language classroom?

CRP Rubric Results

The first criteria from the rubric I observed was maximizing opportunities for students to use their native language. The teacher permitted students to use their native language with high structural frequency because she allowed them to freely engage with the lessons using the language they felt more comfortable speaking embracing their culture as part of the learning process; also, parents spoke Spanish to the teacher when they had questions or comments throughout the lessons, and sometimes students would engage in those conversations. To create culturally responsive lessons, you want to encourage students to participate without dictating the language they need to engage. The teacher used activities like sentence stems in Spanish, visuals with both languages, and sharing her experiences to help students comprehend. Language is an integral part of a culture, and I observed that the teacher created a safe space validating the students' mother tongue and culture. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that culturally relevant teachers utilize their students' culture as a vehicle for learning.

The other theme from the CRP rubric with a high structure of frequency was the real-life connections. The teacher strategically used questions throughout all the lessons from the texts or during the read-alouds that involved a comparison with what she was reading or presenting, asking them to compare how they would do it at home. This allowed students to make connections between home experiences and their customs with the skills presented. To become a culturally relevant teacher as a learning vehicle, you use the students' culture (Ladson-Billings 1995). Sometimes, Karina asked students to engage with family members and ask questions; she sometimes sent home worksheets to collaborate with family members. For example, she compiled all her students' assignments to create a classroom book as a resource later on. Later, it became clear that the thinking behind these activities and the level of engagement using real-life

connections make the context culturally relevant in this class. Teachers should use as a foundation for learning the students' experiences and culture as part of the curriculum to help them connect with the world around them (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Integrating students' voices and experiences into the classroom, especially in an early childhood classroom, is a beneficial way to promote CRP by helping young students understand the lessons and make concrete connections to their lives. Due to the critical needs of emergent bilinguals, especially during the sudden change to virtual learning during the pandemic, it was important for teachers to be cognizant of the fact that students need to feel safe and transform the lessons by using strategies that connect to outside experiences. Moll (2014) explained understanding the perspective of information related to the students' lived experiences and connections to their families generates valuable information addressing their cultural practices. Karina spoke to the fact of learning about the students as she engages in practices like "all about me" poster, etc.

Like many school districts, there is a lack of cultural resources, and in order to support best practices, it is vital to have materials. The frequency of this component was observed in moderation as she used some practices to balance the lack of resources provided by the district. Freeman and Freeman (2000, 2004) pointed out the importance of engaging students when the texts appeal to their background knowledge. The math curriculum was all in English and had some limited connections to Hispanic culture. Teachers used activities provided by the district to use online. Consequently, I observed students having a more difficult time constructing meaning. The online language arts lessons were in Spanish; this curriculum had more integration of cultural resources that students could relate to. The barriers of not having cultural resources may

influence the teachers' daily activities because, in some cases, they either have to create their own or translate things which is time-consuming. The teacher was able to incorporate the emergent bilingual voices in the two subject areas by asking them questions, creating their own materials or reflecting in journals, or by sharing real-life examples to complement the lack of materials. This practice, although it was used, was not implemented with consistency. Oberg De La Garza et al. (2020) stated, "Teachers not only reinforce high academic achievement in CRT but also strive to maintain students' cultural identity and values through the use of reflective materials and resources" (p. 3). Storytelling and oral participation were observed in moderation. Culturally relevant materials need to include a diverse authenticity, and many of the stories from the curriculum were translations. Banks (2013) recommended using books that include different perspectives of various racial and cultural groups (p.194). The observations revealed that the teacher incorporated some culturally relevant resources, but the inconsistent cultural representation in the books the teacher used was evident, which is an issue because students do not see themselves in the books. Factors could have been the limited materials to use online or just adopting a curriculum that does not include robust culturally relevant materials.

The social justice consciousness aspect of the framework was observed with the least frequency. In dual-language classrooms, we must address issues of inequality by responding to the implementation of approaches that include cultural elements (Palmer, 2007). There were many teacher-directed activities where students copied in their journals, completed worksheets, or answered questions. It is more challenging to keep the students' attention for an extended period of time with the Zoom lessons, so I saw the teacher redirecting them a lot and directing the teaching.

Their curriculum content was not consistently open for critical analysis. The tenets call for recognition of racial issues, oppression and to challenge the public system. The teacher allowed students the opportunity to participate in decision-making a few times, empowering students to be part of problem-solving activities. During the lesson that talked about fruits, she did ask if they had a big supermarket close by, and many answered no. She commented that maybe we need to write letters for companies to open more stores close by. She was guiding students to think about the society around them critically. When teachers implement these strategies, they support emergent bilinguals to learn and reflect. Freire (2005) referred to learning when you perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and take action against the oppressive elements of reality (p. 35). Often, institutional structures like curriculums are not open for reflection, but teachers can break the barriers by creating those spaces.

Sustaining cultural identity was observed in moderation because the teacher somehow managed to engage students to utilize their culture, daily customs, and things they could relate to. A couple of times, she embedded her cultural background as conversation starter with her students. However, many of the activities followed the traditional way of teaching a curriculum, where the teacher essentially takes over the lesson focusing on the curriculum skills. She was proud to be bilingual, and she would engage in some conversations that were relevant to the students because they shared similarities. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that the place to explore practices in the naturalistic setting of the classroom; to observe from teachers sharing their lived experiences and their personal investment, these good practices must not be overlooked. To build on students' cultural competence, the teacher bridged her experiences with them; For example, she shared that she attended some community events and mentioned them during Zoom lessons, which maximized learning opportunities by fostering a sense of trust and belonging. She was

mindful of her students' needs attending school virtually by adjusting some lesson materials, with limitations due to the fast switch to virtual setting and the adjustment of times and materials. Another observation was that she did not create a space to purposely sustain culturally relevant activities in the lesson plans to engage with students and sustain the practice with consistency. Sayer and Braun (2020) argued that teachers had to quickly learn how to switch to virtual teaching and simultaneously figure out how to create lesson plans for online delivery and many of them struggled to include proper accommodations for Els. This sudden change affected the traditional practices to meet the needs of emergent bilinguals in online scenarios.

Teacher's Knowledge and Understanding of CRP

The patterns that emerged during the interview included the beliefs of validating students' language as an essential tool for academic achievement, allowing students to make connections with the resources that they have at home and collaboration with family members, and when planning instruction to create opportunities for students to role-play, engage, and empower them to relate to the content. Part of culturally relevant teaching draws from students' experiences to help them make learning encounters more relevant and effective (Oberg De La Garza, et.al., 2020). The interview demonstrated that the teacher had some knowledge of the importance of culturally relevant components but had never received formal training. This must be in part because the teacher was Latina and shared many similarities with her students. Research has shown that when diversifying the teaching force, teachers can serve as role models for the students specially if they share the same background and are now successful professionals and has a potential to improve academic outcomes because they bring to work a deep understanding of cultural experiences (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The first questions in the interview were written to know more about the teacher's background. As the questions unfolded, it was obvious the teacher was drawing from her own educational experiences. She grew up in the same area as her students and understood the learning obstacles her students experience learning a second language. She mentioned that her family spoke Spanish at home, which means she can mirror her own culture in the classroom. Her own personal experiences fostered the students' cultural competence that bridge their home and school lives. Ladson-Billings (2001) stated that culturally relevant teachers inherently keep conceptions of themselves and others that includes the social relations and learning concepts, while they internalized their student's experiences.

In reference to her professional background, the teacher was motivated to become a bilingual teacher because she felt connected with the process of becoming and being bilingual in South Texas. She understands that her students benefit from using their native language and knows the relevance of using culturally appropriate methods to help students to achieve academic success. Based on the research conducted in the last 15 years related to CRP, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested that when you incorporate students' home language in the classroom, students are more likely to experience academic success. She recognizes that for Spanish speaking students the schooling process is not that easy, she uses her personal experiences as teachable moments to make content comprehensible for students. The teacher values the relationship with parents. Before school starts, she sends an activity to complete with the family to complete with information about the students and families. Then throughout the year, she uses information to know more about the families, their needs and engage with them.

The teacher was asked what she knew about CRP and to define it in her own words. Her definition compared to the existing theoretical framework, she was able to infer what it meant

based on what she previously heard in a dual-language training and on the fact that she thought it had to do with prioritizing the students' culture. She explained that she integrates culturally relevant practices by adding songs and talking about customs, food, etc. Her definition did not include all of the specific three tenets of CRP. However, she understands the importance of the students' identity, cultural connections, and giving parents voice to be an important part to share their funds of knowledge with schools. Ladson-Billings (1995) in her study stressed the importance of valuing home communities, perception that all students can learn as teachers can co-construct knowledge with students.

In the interview she mentioned that she follows the first grade adopted curriculum. She also had to mirror some of the activities the rest of her team were using. They followed the scope and sequence of the lessons throughout the year. The focus of culturally relevant pedagogy does not follow a curriculum that dictates what to teach (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Karina used resources to complement the lessons by adding Spanish books, bilingual centers, and culturally relevant poems to enrich the adopted curriculum. The lesson plans were structured using what is written in the teacher's edition guide. However, she tapped into the student's funds of knowledge during the Zoom lessons when she asked them about their experiences, for example, by asking questions such *as ¿cómo lo hace to mama en tú casa? Implementing* these practices, validates their identity, which translates into academic achievement.

The teacher responded that some of the factors that influence her students' learning are related to their current home situation and socioeconomic status. She explained how some of them spend much time with their grandparents because their parents have more than one job or just due to the pandemic. She said many times that what is around them impacts their learning.

In regard to social justice, she stated it was difficult for students to really get into criticizing what was taught because of their young age. For the most part, their conversations are focused on themselves, the latest toy they got, their dog, and other personal things but she tries to involved them in problem solving questions to teach them at a young age how to reflect on things and not just listen and follow directions. Hammond (2015) found that when educators recognize their student's cultural displays and scaffold the instruction, they respond more positively and constructively to new concepts and context.

Implications for Practice

One of the main purposes of this study was to explore CRP implementation in an early childhood DL classroom and also to explore the teacher's knowledge. The participant did not receive official CRP training and was unable to accurately identify the main tenets, however, some of her practices demonstrate the use of CRP. For example, when she allowed students to naturally use their native language to participate or when she helped them make meaningful connections between home and school. The teacher was Latina and shared many of her attributes with her students. Villegas and Irvine (2010) argued three empirically based important points where they explain the benefits that teachers of color bring to school: (1) they serve as role models to all students; (2) since they tend to work in high minority urban schools, they reduce the acute shortage of educators; and (3) these teachers are well-suited for teaching minority students because they share and understand their cultural experiences. The teacher acknowledges that in the dual-language trainings she has heard the trainers talking about CRP. When you work with dual-language programs, language and culture are essential parts of those trainings, which can merge some of the tenets of CRP. In order to effectively sustain these practices, school districts need to include CRP trainings as part of their bilingual programs. In regards to the tenets

of social justice, in this particular study, the age of the students was a challenge. Consequently, to further develop age-appropriate critical thinking skills for her students, she attempted to provide opportunities in a variety of ways by solving simple problems critically, but the implications were related to the students young age and the limitations of time and curriculum used in virtual classes. Students are not developmentally ready to critically go in depth to challenge societal norms. In the online environment, the problem arose when teacher and

students were not accustomed to working in virtual scenarios. To scaffold the instruction, keep students motivated, and meet the linguistic needs of emergent bilinguals without the traditional best practices was a challenge. As a result, the effects of not having the traditional practices in an online environment reduced the level of student engagement and reduced the level of peer language support. The implications of these factors may be important to continue making home-school connections stronger to create processes of learning concepts that include real-life situations to increase engagement, including the use of native language.

Future Research

Further studies in the implementation of CRP in online dual-language classrooms that measure students' academic achievement is needed. There are areas that are important for future research. First, further research is needed in exploring the connection of CRP and academic success, where it can measure how successfully a student can be academically in an online classroom that places CRP as a main component of teaching versus a classroom that does not implement CRP in online learning. Such research can be used to adequately educate all stakeholders in best practices that can help emergent bilinguals succeed. Second, to study how effective the practices are used by a Latino/a teacher that has not received CRP training but does have a foundation in dual-language programs.

Limitations of Study

This particular case study included only one teacher; thus, it cannot be said that it is happening in many dual-language classrooms as it was only exploring one classroom. As a result, the convenience sample from this study may not be representative of all the dual language teachers. Furthermore, because of the pandemic and all the pressure teachers have to deal with right now, the number of Zoom lessons collected was limited. As a result, the data collection was limited to the number of sessions collected by the district. The limitations are related to the number of lessons observed, the number of participants, and the timeframe. In addition, because CRP practices have been traditionally excluded from the regular mandated curriculum, teachers might also additionally face pushback due to lack of knowledge in this area and mandated curriculum restrictions. Another limitation of the study includes the impact of CRP in virtual learning versus in person.

Conclusion

In this current study, the teacher preparation on CRP played an important role. Due to the nature of dual-language programs, some components were included in the trainings related to students' culture. However, the instructional practices could have been implemented in context with more consistency if the teacher had received official training on implementing the culturally relevant pedagogy framework. The early childhood dual-language teacher frequently used some instructional practices that were effectively aligned to CRP. She allowed students to use their native language, therefore, more comfortable engaging in the lessons. She maximized her student's academic achievement by supplementing the lack of resources when using real-life scenarios and books created by the class. The online scenario was different for everyone; the

teacher implemented some components of CRP using her knowledge of it without proper training.

When you empower students by validating who they are, they are more equipped to transform society. CRP is grounded in creating spaces for minority students to transfer what they know, creating a bridge between home and school, and helping them to advocate using their skills to critique the social context of their current present. It is important to keep this in mind when we are delivering online lessons. Teachers need to continue creating relationship-building skills on students' backgrounds to sustain meaningful learning and create those spaces valuing their funds of knowledge. Online learning is a new way of teaching that will continue growing. We need to be conscientious of what systems we need to have in place that can effectively meet the needs of the emergent bilinguals participating in virtual lessons.

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APPENDIX A

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY RUBRIC

(Rubric adapted from CRCD Math Task Rubric)

Criteria to Observe	Degree of CRP Structure High (20 or >)	Degree of CRP Structure Moderate (10-5)	Degree of CRP Structure Low (5 or <)	Total for the week
The lesson target objective incorporates real-life connections				
The lesson maximizes opportunities for students to use their native language to easily participate				
The lesson has a social justice space that allows students to critique/reflect about themselves, their community and their world				
The lesson enables students to develop and sustain their cultural identities				
The lesson includes culturally diverse resources to allow engaging opportunities				

https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Session-J_CCSU-CRP_Keazer_Jones.pdf

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE

- Please share with me some information about yourself, where you are from, what is your native language, etc.

- What motivated you to become a teacher and how many years have you been teaching?

- What do you know about culturally relevant teaching? How do you define culturally relevant pedagogy?

- Have you received any formal training? If the answer is yes, follow up questions would be – Did the training include components on how to implement CRP in a classroom?

- Tell me about your planning process of a lesson, specially now during online teaching.

- How do you get to know your students? How do you engage them in the lessons?

- How do you integrate students' culture in your lessons?

- How do you challenge students to use their voice and to reflect or critique established information or norms? (Development of Socio-Political Consciousness).

- What factors do you think influence emergent bilinguals learning?

- Tell me about ways to implement emergent bilinguals lived experiences outside of school into the curriculum taught at school. Can you give me some examples?

- Is there anything else you would like to share?

  *Other questions may be added after observing the Zoom lessons for further clarification

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Myrna Rasmussen is very passionate when it comes to providing the best education to all bilingual learners. She understands the importance of both knowledge and language as forms of empowerment for students. Her appreciation of different cultures, relationships, and communities are her strengths, and they help embolden her leadership and advocacy. She has a bachelor's degree from the Universidad Interamericana, Puerto Rico, and a master's degree from the University of Texas–San Antonio. Growing up with a Spanish heritage inspired her to pursue a Doctoral degree at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, which she successfully completed in December 2021, specializing in bilingual studies. She is interested in implementing additive dual-language programs, creating spaces for culturally relevant pedagogies, and prioritizing professional development and community involvement as fundamental components for success, focusing intensely on respecting and celebrating culture.

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