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A PULSE ON LANGUAGE EQUITY IN FIRST-GRADE URBAN CLASSROOMS

by

Deborah Kuether

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ABSTRACT

A PULSE ON LANGUAGE EQUITY IN FIRST GRADE URBAN CLASSROOMS

by

Deborah Kuether

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2021
Under the Supervision of Leanne M. Evans, Ph.D.

Students of color are the majority in many U.S. urban public schools, yet U.S. education policy and practice continue to be centered largely on White, middle-class, monocultural, and monolingual norms of educational achievement (Alim & Paris, 2017). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to learn more about the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. Evidence using the foundations of the critically conscious teacher framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and of the role of language and culture as a medium in teaching and learning (de Jong & Harper, 2008) were used to analyze the progress in teacher development and practice during literacy instruction. Three findings emerged from the data: (a) Teacher decision making was oriented in a variety of self-selected professional growth experiences; (b) Teachers leveraged the online setting to enhance a culturally sustaining learning environment; (c) Teachers sought validation for decision making in their work with culturally sustaining practices. The findings of this study inspired the development of the Teacher Habits of Culturally Sustaining Practice Model, which contributes to research focused on the education and support of teachers' effective literacy practices in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

To My Children and Parents,
Thank you for your understanding and support.
My gratitude cannot be expressed fully in words.

❤️

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAL   African American Language

CSP   Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

DAE   Dominant American English

EL   English Learner

ELL   English Language Learner

ESOL   English for Speakers of Other Languages

LEP   Limited English Proficiency

LRT   Linguistically Responsive Teaching

WME   White Mainstream English

researchers that continue to uncover realities and truths that the must be addressed within the educational system.

Special appreciation to Dr. Jeffrey Hawkins, Dr. Leigh E. Wallace, and Dr. Karen C. Stoiber must be included as their specific attention and support through this process has been of extreme value. This group of highly skilled researchers and educators offered feedback and support which were beneficial for the development of the research. Thank you for stepping in and offering your expertise when it was needed most. Your talents in this process have been invaluable and my thanks goes out to each of you.

Lastly, it is imperative for me to acknowledge an extraordinary group of individuals, my C and I colleagues, who offered me unwavering support and encouragement through the entire process. There is nothing that this hard-working, brilliant, and talented group of educators cannot accomplish on behalf of students. It has been a privilege to have learned from and worked alongside each of you. I have witnessed the difference your contributions have made in the lives of many students and their families.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The rapidly growing demographic of students in U.S. urban public classrooms who speak a language other than English continues to increase at rates that are unprecedented (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018). It has been reported that White monolingual speakers have become the minority in many U.S. public schools (Maxwell, 2014). The American Community Survey conducted by the federal Census Bureau indicated that in 2017, nearly half (48.2%) of the residents in the five largest U.S. cities now speak a language other than English outside school (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018). This survey includes over two million households and is the largest survey ever conducted by the federal government (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018). Overall, the number of U.S. residents speaking a language other than English at home reached a record of nearly 67 million (Maxwell, 2014). The total number of people has increased to seven million since 2010 and has increased by nearly 35 million since 1990 (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018). Furthermore, of school-age children (5–17 years) who speak a language other than English at home, 85% were born in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Even among adults 18 and older, more than one-third of those who speak a language other than English at home are U.S.-born (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018). These statistics clearly reveal the need to move toward inclusive and sustaining language pedagogical practices for teachers (Calderón et al., 2011). The number of students who would benefit from teachers who are equipped with the knowledge, skill, and will to implement language instruction from an inclusive and asset-based approach (Yosso, 2005) creates an urgency in determining how to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students.

Study Problem

Since fall 2014, students of color are the majority in U.S. public schools, yet U.S. education policy and practice continue to be centered largely on White, middle-class, monocultural, and monolingual norms of educational achievement (Alim & Paris, 2017). Research has explored the ways in which generic or White (standardized English-speaking and monolingual) teaching practices have typically ignored or further marginalized specific populations (Daniels & Varghese 2020; Haddix, 2008).

The instructional needs of large groups of students requires attention when there is a disproportionate number of White female teachers as compared to students of color across the U.S., including the urban district featured in this study. Figure 1 captures the percentage of teaching staff in the study district by ethnicity and gender and shows that the majority of teaching staff in the study district (51%) is White and female. When compared to the percentage of students in the study district by ethnicity represented in Figure 2, it is worthwhile to note that there is a significant difference in the race of the teaching population compared to the student population. The student population is 51% African American (term was used by the study district's state department of instruction) and 27% Hispanic (term was used by the study district's state department of instruction). When compared to the overall percentage of White educators (female and male combined) at 68%, this finding is noteworthy.

Based on these data comparisons, it must be acknowledged that within the study district there is a stark contrast in the racial demographic of the teachers and the student population they serve in the urban district featured in this study. The contrast in the student and teacher population is a dynamic that must be acknowledged, analyzed, and addressed in educational policy, procedure, and practice.

Figure 1

2019–20 Percentage of Teaching Staff in Study District by Ethnicity and Gender
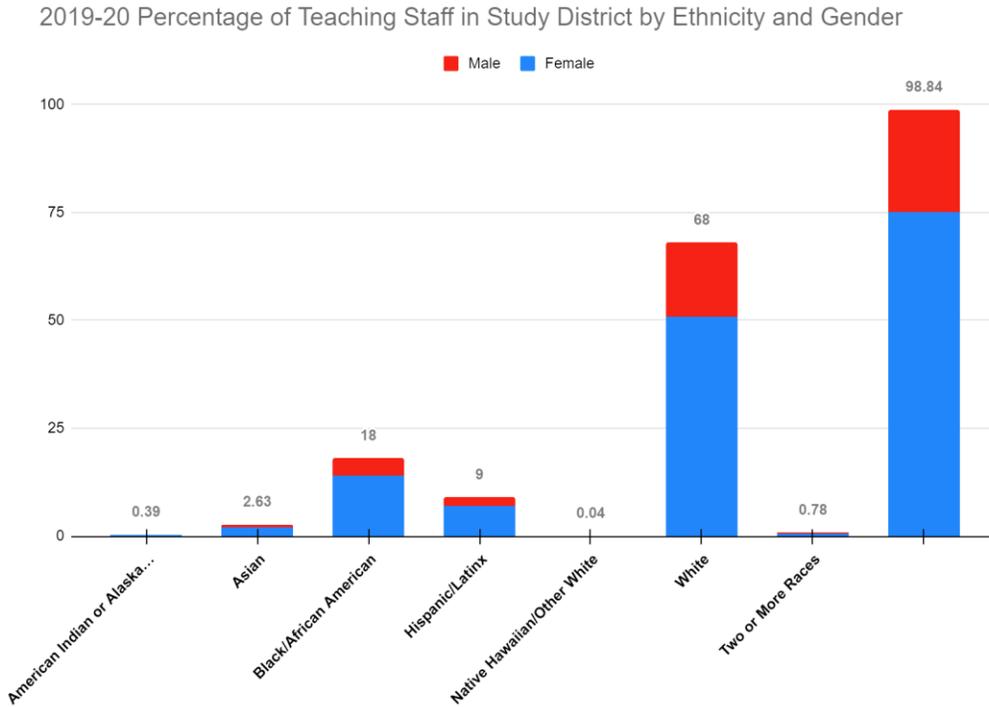
Figure 2

2019–20 Percentage of Students in Study District by Ethnicity
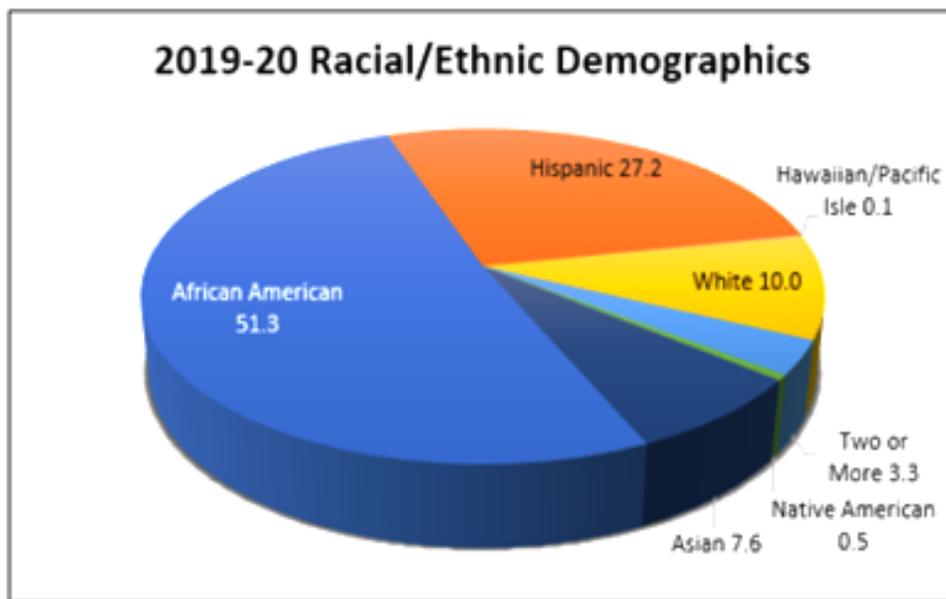
This current study aligns with the racial category terms developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in a web-based document, *Race and Pedagogy* (2017). The term "students of color" includes students who identify as Black, African American, Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Latinx, Chicanx, Native American, or multiracial. The term "students of color" is viewed by some as more positive than "non-White" (Yosso, 2005), an identifier that defines people based on what they are not. Other individuals find the term "students of color" to be a more representative description of their identity than the language "racial minorities," which defines people based on a statistical status (*Race and Pedagogy*, 2017).

Oftentimes, well-meaning mainstream teachers unknowingly categorize bilingual and multilingual learners as students with academic problems (Souto-Manning, 2016). Although this may not be intentional, these teachers may lack an understanding of the potential of asset-based approaches (Yosso, 2005) and may tend to fall into patterns of conditioned behaviors where comparisons to Dominant American English (DAE) cause learners to be categorized as struggling, below level, or limited in ability (Baker-Bell, 2017). The concept of DAE—also called academic English, the language of school, the language of power, or communication in academic settings—is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). These DAE teaching practices have created a long history of the Americanization or the assimilation to White Anglo-Saxon values and practices (Souto-Manning, 2016), which perpetuates the erasure of immigrant children's languages and cultures by defaulting to the language and culture of power (Delpit, 1988). This unknowing

categorization and related behaviors can be cultivated through implicit bias and/or implicit racism (Simmons, 2019).

Implicit bias is a concept that identifies the ways in which people inevitably and unconsciously develop patterns in their brains to organize information, which in turn affects their attitudes and actions that create real-world implications even though they may not be aware that those biases exist within themselves (Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2020). These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Additionally, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection (Kirwhan Institute, 2020).

The Impact of Implicit Racism

The impact of implicit bias is significant in educational research focused on cultural- and linguistic-based practices. The implicit bias associations within the subconscious can cause individuals to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, culture, language, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations (Kirwhan Institute, 2020).

Simmons (2019) paints a picture of implicit racism by describing an example through the expectation of immigrants to speak perfect English and implies that immigrants should be expected to disregard their native tongue(s) to strive toward a colonial language that was standardized by the same people who destroyed the homelands from which these people have

migrated. This deficit-oriented view perpetuates the ideology that people in Western countries should focus on English because it is more important (Paris & Alim, 2014). In turn, that adds to the concept that assimilation is necessary for immigrants and refugees, and it is solely the assimilation into a colonial culture that is acceptable and encouraged (Paris, 2012). Not only does this expectation of assimilation further marginalize Indigenous people on whose lands U.S. citizens have settled, but it also becomes another way in which the settler-colonial culture further oppresses people of color. Souto-Manning (2016) reminds us that the English as rigor mindset is far reaching and stretches to learners who present any dialect that falls outside the DAE norm (2016).

The mainstream teacher is the content-focused teacher who works in partnership with ESL teachers and has historically received less education in language acquisition and understanding of nonmajoritarian languages (Evans, 2020; Paris, 2012). Therefore, the mainstream teacher has less knowledge of asset-based approaches (Yosso, 2005). According to Alim and Paris (2017), the mainstream teacher who does not enact a culturally sustaining pedagogical approach can negatively affect large populations of learners during their most formative literacy years (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). In the district featured in this study, mainstream teachers encompass the official designation that teachers in ESL settings receive when they teach in a school that has an ESL formal language program. In addition to the descriptions of mainstream teachers as the content-focused teachers designated within certain programming, Paris (2012) adds that mainstream teachers are predominantly White, middle-class, female, monolingual, and English-speaking.

Countering Implicit Norms

Baker-Bell's (2017) research advances the need for culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom instructional practices to further suggest students of color can suffer the underlying consequences of teachers who are operating from the DAE, language-of-power mindset. In this work, Baker-Bell (2017) argues that when language educators and scholars are actually invested in linguistic justice for linguistically and racially diverse students, educators begin to question whose linguistic and cultural norms are privileged by labels such as *academic language*. When teachers challenge the labels that describe linguistic learning it leads them to operate from an asset-based approach that includes countering implicit norms that influence the tone of the teaching and learning experience.

Default implicit normalizing, such as eye contact when talking or volume and tone of the voice can be connected to the same conditioning that teachers have been subjected to prior to entering the teaching field (Canagarajah, 2014). Daniels and Varghese (2020) suggest that the same teacher behaviors that affect speakers of nonmajoritarian languages may be the same generators of certain behaviors for other marginalized populations or non-DAE speakers as well. To believe that teaching and learning should look uniform and produce a set of results among all students (Dutro & Cartun, 2016), even though teaching and learning is connected to our personal human experiences that go beyond one neutral package (Daniels & Varghese, 2020), suggests that there are no clinical teaching practices that can cut across the rich diversity within each classroom. This highlights how the dynamics of teacher and student interaction are riddled through every part of instruction. Kumashiro (2001) believes that uniformity in practices negates the value of language diversity. Teacher dialectic subjectivity toward students is not just imperative to teacher practice but must become a pedagogical resource (Morgan, 2020).

Study Purpose

  The purpose of this study was to learn more about the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. This research took place through a perspective that U.S. education policy and practice continue to be centered largely on White, middle-class, monocultural, and monolingual norms of educational achievement (Paris, 2012). The goal in this study was to identify whether there is evidence of valuing linguistic dialect in the literacy classroom and how the teachers made this visible in their instructional practices.

  This goal is important, because today's classrooms are diverse and culturally complex. It suggests classrooms should be pluralistic learning spaces rich with various languages, dialects, regionalisms, registers, and other linguistic variations (Canagarajah, 2014). Embracing a pluralistic society means altering the traditional practices and ways of measuring proficiency in the classroom to include a broader scope beyond the White, middle-class norms that linger as a dominating force when dictating educational achievement (Paris & Alim, 2014). As Paris and Alim suggest, classrooms are filled with children who are a part of the pluralistic society, and every classroom teacher must include practices that respect and build from a broad variation of linguistic diversity. This study examined literacy instruction in first-grade mainstream online classrooms to identify the ways that teachers create learning environments and execute instruction.

  Through this study, more insight was gained regarding the types of teacher behaviors, practices, and resources that teachers rely on—or what is lacking—and which instructional resources and practices motivate and engage students who may speak nonmajoritarian languages to strengthen overall literacy outcomes while simultaneously respecting identity and language diversity. Additionally, this type of experience informs the need for instructional resources,

online content and platforms, and content of professional development for teachers, so that students who have been historically marginalized can be equitably served. Frameworks and protocols that assist mainstream teachers with decision making, lesson plan development, and universally embedded culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, increase the possibilities of connecting with students who speak nonmajoritarian languages and heighten the effectiveness of literacy instruction and achievement outcomes. Focusing on culturally and linguistically sustaining teacher practices can lead to the creation of models of teaching and learning spaces (particularly in online settings) where equitable approaches are routinely visible, effective, and purposeful.

Research Questions

The struggle for language equity has existed for decades (Baker-Bell, 2020). This study connected the knowledge of language diversity and the progress that educators have made toward valuing and supporting language diversity in the classroom. It looked closely at the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. The research questions that shaped this phenomenological study were:

1. What are the experiences of first-grade mainstream teachers as they identify and plan to implement linguistically sustaining strategies during English literacy instruction in classrooms with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages?

2. Which language strategies do first-grade mainstream teachers implement during English literacy instruction, and which factors influenced the use of these practices?

   a. How do mainstream teachers respond to nonmajoritarian languages?

b. In what ways do mainstream teachers plan for and use language during literacy instruction?

3. What actions are mainstream first-grade teachers taking to build inclusive experiences for all languages in online settings?

These research questions guided the investigation of mainstream first-grade teachers and their knowledge base, planning, and instructional practices related to explicit use of student language from a culturally and linguistically sustaining approach. By analyzing teacher practice through this research, more was learned about how language equity is perceived and how practitioners use their knowledge of language equity to support their daily literacy instruction.

Significance of Study

There is much debate regarding best instructional practices for students who are learning in a second language (Vásquez et al., 2013). Language learning is equally important and synergistic with all the language arts standards (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The research guiding this study was grounded in an asset-based approach (Yosso, 2005), and emphasized the need to go beyond the mindset of using language only as a bridge to cross to gain proficiency in DAE (Baker-Bell, 2020). The significance of this study lies in the decision-making among mainstream teachers on language and identity, the role that language and identity play in overall literacy development for students, personal identity, and how teachers connect that knowledge to shape their pedagogy. Gaining insight into mainstream teacher knowledge and pedagogy regarding language equity and the degree that language is used as an asset for literacy instruction can shed light on effective teaching practices among mainstream teachers in a fast-growing pluralistic society.

The mainstream teacher is the content-focused teacher who works in partnership with ESL teachers. The construct of the mainstream teacher includes the reality that these teachers are predominantly White, middle-class, female, monolingual, and English-speaking (Alim &Paris, 2017). Mainstream general education teachers in urban settings are now seeing significantly higher numbers of nonmajoritarian languages among their students (Souto-Manning, 2016). Therefore, mainstream teachers (Beeman & Urow, 2012), not just ESL specialists or bilingual professionals, need to be able to provide instruction at the same level of quality as monolingual English-speakers receive (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Language equity instruction is a different approach compared to what has been implemented through traditional education programming over the years (Souto-Manning, 2016). It is an inclusive, asset-based approach (Yosso, 2005) that recognizes that every individual comes with distinctive language traits regardless of the myriad identifiers including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, age, birthplace, or socioeconomic status (Paris & Alim, 2014). Language equity instruction is counterintuitive to how some teachers view mainstream U.S. culture and monolingualism as the norm, and this English-centric view ignores linguistic diversity (Reagan & Osborn, 2019). The perspective of monolingualism as the norm perpetuates misconceptions about teaching English language learners (de Jong & Harper, 2005). The ability to tap into different funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) and cultivate students' linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) has been found to be essential in the work with diverse learners, English language learners in particular, and must be inclusive of Black Language (Baker-Bell, 2020) as well. Since mainstream teachers are generally not given this specialized language preparation and education (Evans, 2020), there is a likelihood that many are not prepared to provide effective instruction for speakers of nonmajoritarian languages (Calderón

et al., 2011), and many mainstream teachers do not come with lived experiences outside of being White, female, and monolingual (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Guiding Conceptual Frameworks

This study was informed by the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework, which offer rich analysis of orientations, pedagogical knowledge, and skills of linguistically sustaining practices that can assist teachers in their commitment to responsive practices in the classroom. These frameworks informed the analysis of culturally and linguistically sustaining teacher practice by examining teacher practice for student language sustainability, exploring teachers' understanding about the dynamic nature of culture for their students, and ascertaining teachers' ability to critically and meaningfully include the practices and beliefs of communities of color into their learning environments.

The use of the critically conscious teacher education foundations (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework provided opportunities for examining teachers' practices for student language sustainability, the level of understanding about the dynamic nature of culture for the students whom these educators serve (identity), and their ability to critically and meaningfully include the practices and beliefs of communities of color into their learning environments. These frameworks, described at length in chapter two, guided collection and analysis of evidence related to the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. The perspectives of Joseph and Evans (2018) and de Jong and Harper (2008) have qualities of linguistic/cultural flexibility and asset-based approaches that are the embodiment of effective mainstream classes.

Fostering Linguistic and Cultural Flexibility

Valuing language diversity is a massive undertaking on its own for any teacher, but it is only a first step to the ongoing responsibility of teachers (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Even though the personal and professional development needed to build the repertoire of knowledge and instructional practice is considerable, it is crucial for teachers serving students who speak nonmajoritarian languages to take ownership of the individual growth that is necessary to develop these instructional practices as we exist in a pluralistic society (Alim, 2007). Since language equity is not reserved solely for classrooms that have an *othering* label, such as ESL or ESOL, for example, it is imperative that mainstream teachers come to the teaching profession prepared to instruct students who have always existed in a pluralistic society, especially if the teachers are accountable for literacy instruction (Souto-Manning, 2016). Teachers must create teaching and learning experiences that are responsive to students' cultural interests and needs, so that they are provided with instructional opportunities that optimize the familial, aspirational, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant strengths (Yosso, 2005).

Alim (2007) argues that youth cultural and linguistic practices are of value in their own right and should be creatively foregrounded rather than merely viewed as resources to take students from where they are to some presumably *better* place or ignored altogether. Also, it is perceived that this *better* place is achieved through a single pathway that is available only through the language of power, or DAE, and perpetuates a gatekeeper mentality of limiting certain student of color populations' access to higher levels of achievement or accomplishment (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Furthermore, as a result of continuing demographic change toward a majority multilingual society of color, fostering linguistic and cultural flexibility has an instrumental purpose for both students of color and White students, as multilingualism and

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multiculturalism are increasingly linked to access and power in U.S. and global contexts. The teacher and school are bound by duty to prepare students to have the dynamic cultural dexterity (Alim & Paris, 2017) required in a pluralistic society, and analyzing the progress of public education systems in these asset-based approaches is significant for this study.

Asset-Based Approaches

Alim and Paris's (2017) idea of cultural dexterity is built upon an asset-based approach (Yosso, 2005) and views diversity in thought, culture, and traits as positive assets. The importance of an asset-based approach (Yosso, 2005) allows students and educators to articulate experiences using cultural assets (Yosso, 2005) to guide academic engagement. Research has heightened awareness of the ways that mainstream teachers lack knowledge about students who speak nonmajoritarian languages (Alim & Paris, 2017; Lee, 2017; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Mainstream teachers serve students better when they have formal education and ongoing professional development that includes an anti-racist approach to language teaching and learning (Baker-Bell, 2019). Lee states that teachers and students alike should be valued for what they bring to the classroom rather than being characterized by what they may need to work on or lack, and their assets should not added as an afterthought (Souto-Manning, 2016). To truly embrace a sustaining mindset, teachers should not see students' languages, literacies, or ways of being as somehow marginal or as something simply to be added to the existing curriculum. Rather, these facets of students' selves and communities must be centered meaningfully in classroom learning, across units and projects (Baker-Bell, 2020). Built upon decades of significant asset-based pedagogical research (Banks, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Yosso, 2005), asset-based approaches have opposed deficit perspectives, working against White superiority and systemic racism. As such, asset-based approaches validate that the practices and ways of being and

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communicating for students of color are legitimate and should be included meaningfully in classroom learning (Paris & Alim, 2014).

This study also draws from culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Culturally sustaining pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017) frames this research through examination and focus on sustaining linguistic practices. When considering cultural and linguistic sustainability, the purposeful focus on sustainability and the progress toward students' right to their own language in an education system that has perpetuated language bias for decades (Baker-Bell, 2020) is examined. The term sustaining is of particular importance in this theoretical frame because it is a more recent expansion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), which has assumed a central role in teacher education, inspiring a generation of teachers to enter the classroom with a renewed commitment to affirming students' cultural, racial, and ethnic identities (Baker-Bell, 2020).

The CSP (Alim & Paris, 2017) conceptual framework allowed for the analysis of teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect an awareness of linguistically sustaining responsiveness in literacy instructional practices among first-grade mainstream teachers in urban settings. The combined use of these frameworks allowed the study of teacher planning for language instruction through teacher interviews, teacher lesson plan analysis, and classroom environment data. Additionally, the frameworks supported the analysis of teacher instructional practice related to language. These conceptual viewpoints guided the focus on the process of language for learning and the understanding that language is cultural construct and an essential mode of learning that must be explicitly planned in the goals of instruction. Culture and language equity methods that are inclusive of linguistic diversity increase literacy learning and impact overall achievement outcomes (de Jong & Harper, 2008) that are specific to the context and

circumstances that exist in increasingly pluralistic urban classrooms. The context of this study was purposeful because it provided a well-aligned opportunity for a rich analysis of language equity in cultural and linguistically diverse urban classroom settings.

Study Context

It must be noted that research conducted for this study was altered from in-person classrooms to online settings to accommodate the unforeseen circumstances that were a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was declared in March 2020. Due to the pandemic, face-to-face instruction was not possible, and this research was prohibited from in-person classrooms, thus creating both crisis and opportunity. The pandemic forced an entirely new way of conducting the business of school for the large urban district featured in this study. The conditions of the pandemic further shined a light on the vast inequities that exist in urban settings, particularly related to internet and/or technology access.

Urban District Responsiveness during the Pandemic

In the early days of the pandemic, the urban district in this study prioritized efforts on food distribution. Twenty "Stop, Grab, and Go" sites provided meals and printed instructional grade-level workbooks to any individual who came to any one of the designated locations. Eight weeks into the pandemic, Chromebook and hot spot distribution began, and families were issued one Chromebook and hot spot. After it was determined that the one Chromebook per household was not conducive for families with more than one school-age child, more Chromebooks and hot spots were purchased, and additional Chromebooks and hot spots were distributed on an as-needed basis.

The prioritization of food distribution at the cost of providing what some voiced as being inadequate educational supports generated public criticism. Many questioned the role of the

district and the duty of an education institution to feed families during the pandemic. The use of financial resources for food service, at a time when the district was suffering from enormous budget deficits to the point of relying on money from a referendum to maintain basic levels of service, was a topic of debate. There was some agreement acknowledging the variance in both the quantity and quality of instruction during the pandemic based on several variables, including teacher quality and online connectivity. Comparisons were made to neighboring suburban districts where online school was "business as usual" and students logged in with their district-issued devices and proceeded with online learning that was established at the start of the school year.

The political and social climate of the district during this study is extremely important to consider as this study is framed. The complexity of a large urban school district is unique to begin with, and the uncertainty of the pandemic further added to the complications that rippled through all levels of society. For the first time in recent history, unprecedented scenarios were encountered that shifted every aspect of daily living—globally and locally. School-age children were unable to attend school for months, and the experience of school had to be redefined for everyone. The sudden mandate to cease in-person attendance for so many families caused upset in ways that were both unexpected and unforeseen. Planning and implementing this study was affected significantly by the constant flux in changing federal, state, and local policy and procedures for day-to-day operation in an urban public school setting.

An Immediate Shift to Online Learning

Teaching in an online setting contributes to the uniqueness of the context of the pandemic. The specific circumstances related to the speed of conversion to the online setting and the modes of transitioning were highly compromised due to the pandemic (Code et al., 2020).

Illuminated were the challenges of teaching and learning in an online setting (which would be a new platform and difficult for some educators to get accustomed to in normal conditions), the lack of preparation, and extremely limited planning and support. Furthermore, all of these conditions were forming simultaneously while teachers were acclimating to the pandemic situation (Code et al., 2020).

As described, the large urban district in this study faced difficulties addressing the connectivity issues for students and staff. There was a significant delay in providing the necessary devices (Chromebooks and hot spots) to students in order to provide online access to instructional resources and content. The structural inequities associated with connectivity and the access limitations for urban students exposed hurdles that had been neglected in the past. It was not the intent of this study to highlight all the obstacles that were encountered during the pandemic, but rather to accentuate the methods that teachers employed in online settings to show evidence of responsive practices through culturally and linguistically sustaining mindsets and understandings of asset-based (Yosso, 2005) instructional language approaches. Framed by Joseph and Evans's (2018) critically conscious teacher preparation framework and de Jong and Harper's (2008) conceptual framework, evidence of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017) in the online classroom environment and classroom instructional literacy practices was observed and analyzed with the goal of documenting teacher practice specific to online settings.

Definitions of Terms and Concepts

Language is powerful and has historical, sociocultural, and political impact (Joseph & Evans, 2018). It is imperative to state the purposeful selection of definitions to ensure that the alignment to the dissertation research is clearly defined, while also acknowledging that there are

variances and contrasts in definitions. The following list of definitions of terms and concepts is referenced in this dissertation using this aligned research.

Academic English. Also called the language of school, the language of power, or communicating in academic settings, academic English is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014).

African American Language (AAL). African American Language (AAL) in instruction (Lee, 2017) is used interchangeably with African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black Language (BL), and Ebonics.

Linguistic Racism. The linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization speakers endure when using their language in schools and in everyday life (Baker-Bell, 2019). It may include actions teachers take such as silencing, correcting, and policing students when they communicate in patterns that are culturally associated with groups that are outside dominant American English-speaking patterns. It is the belief that there is something inherently wrong with nonmajoritarian language and should not be tolerated in academic settings. It is the act of denying the rights for students to use their native/home language as a linguistic resource during their language and literacy learning as an asset. It is requiring that students reject their language and culture to acquire White Mainstream English (WME) language behaviors and encourages code-switching to avoid discrimination.

Anti-Racist/Anti-Bias Education. Instructional practices that avoid placing one race or ethnic groups' values, mores, or ways of speaking as being superior to another. Anti-racist/anti-biased educators are committed to education equity for all students by focusing on the ones who

have been historically and currently marginalized in the school environment and society alike Nicholas, 2020).

Asset-Based. Views diversity in thought, culture, and traits as positive assets (Yosso, 2005). Teachers and students alike are valued for what they bring to the classroom rather than being characterized by what they may need to work on or lack, and their assets are not added as an afterthought (Souto-Manning, 2016). This means that educators don't see students' languages (e.g., Navajo, African American Language, Spanish, standard English), literacies (e.g., hip-hop, poetry, social media, street art), or ways of being (e.g., spiritual beliefs, ways of relating to adults and elders) as somehow marginal or as something simply to be added to the existing curriculum. Rather, these facets of students' selves and communities must be centered meaningfully in classroom learning across units and projects (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Black Language. The variety of Ebonics spoken by African Americans in the United States—known as Black English Vernacular, African American English, U.S. Ebonics, and African American Language, among other names—reflects a distinctive language system that many African American students use in daily conversation and in the performance of academic tasks. Like every other linguistic system, the Ebonics of African American students is systematic and rule-governed, and it is not an obstacle to learning (CCCC, 2016).

Connectivity. A generic term for connecting devices to each other in order to transfer data back and forth. It often refers to network connections, which embrace bridges, routers, switches, and gateways as well as backbone networks. It may also refer to connecting a home or office to the Internet or connecting a digital camera to a computer or printer (Ziff Davis, LLC, PCMag Digital Group, 2019).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. Teaching and learning that seeks to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Dominant American English (DAE). White Mainstream English is commonly referred to as standard English or Dominant American English (Baker-Bell, 2020); these terms will be used interchangeably throughout the dissertation with other terms such as Standard American English. The concept of DAE—also called academic English, the language of school, the language of power, or communicating in academic settings—is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014).

Ebonics. A term for a category of Black Language forms that derive from common historical, social, cultural, and material conditions. It refers to language forms such as African American Language, Jamaican Creole, Gullah Creole, West African Pidgin English, and Haitian Creole as well as Afro-Euro language varieties spoken in European countries. The term "Ebonics" was created by Black psychologist Dr. Robert Williams in 1973 to identify the various languages created by Africans forced to adapt to colonization and enslavement (Williams, 1975).

English Language Variance. The term "linguistic variation" (or simply "variation") refers to regional, social, or contextual differences in the ways that a particular language is used. Variation between languages, dialects, and speakers is known as "interspeaker variation." Variation within the language of a single speaker is called "intraspeaker variation." Since the rise of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, interest in linguistic variation (also called "linguistic variability") has developed rapidly. R. L. Trask notes that "variation, far from being peripheral and inconsequential, is a vital part of ordinary linguistic behavior" (1999, p. 221). The formal

study of variation is known as "variationist (socio)linguistics." All aspects of language (including phonemes, morphemes, syntactic structures, and meanings) are subject to variation.

English Learners (ELs). ELs, the umbrella term that encompasses learners of academic English language—also called academic English, the language of school, the language of power, or communicating in academic settings—is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). It can include terms such as "English as a second language" (ESL), "English language learners" (ELLs), "limited English proficiency" (LEP), and "English for Speakers of Other Languages" (ESOL).

Equity. An allocation of district resources, supports, and opportunities that is based on the needs of students and staff. This is not the same as equality, which is the following:

- access: the tangibility of quality resources that are distributed equitably
- content: the high-quality material that reflects the culturally and linguistically diverse learners who make up our district and society
- pedagogy: learning and teaching practices responsive to students' cultural interests and needs so that students are afforded optimal instructional opportunities that capitalize on the familial, aspirational, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant strengths (Yosso, 2005)

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). The meaning of ESOL applies to both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. One reason why this term was created: Some individuals argue that when students are learning English in a native English-speaking country (ESL), these students are not necessarily learning a second language. It could, in fact, be a student's third or even fourth language. "English as a

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second language," then, is limiting and not fully comprehensive in its description (Souto-Manning, 2016).

Implicit Bias. Ways in which people inevitably and unconsciously develop patterns in their brains to organize information, which in turn affects individuals' attitudes and actions that create real-world implications even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves (Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2020). These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Implicit biases are not accessible through introspection (Kirwhan Institute, 2020).

Implicit Racism. The implicit bias associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations (Kirwhan Institute, 2020).

Language Acquisition. The process of learning language (Krashen, 1982).

Mainstream Teachers. Mainstream teacher encompasses the official designation that teachers in English as a second language (ESL) settings receive when they teach in a school that has a formal language program. The mainstream teacher is the content-focused teacher who works in partnership with ESL teachers. It also includes the idea that these teachers are

predominantly White, middle-class, female, monolingual, and English-speaking (Alim &Paris, 2017).

  Nonmajoritarian Languages. Majoritarianism is one of several mechanisms of decision-making in a democracy. Under majoritarianism, a majority of the population is entitled make decisions that affect the society (Saunders, 2010). Nonmajoritarian languages is the concept of pluralism which promotes peaceful coexistence of diversities through the spirit of accommodation as well as solidarity.

  Pluralistic Society. The belief that people of different beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyles can coexist in the same society and participate equally in the political process. Pluralism recognizes that in some cases, the acceptance and integration of minority groups should be achieved and protected by legislation, such as civil rights laws (Alim & Paris, 2017).

  Standard American English. White Mainstream English is commonly referred to as standard English or Dominant American English (Baker-Bell, 2020) and will be used in the dissertation interchangeably. The concept of academic language—also called academic English, the language of school, the language of power, or communicating in academic settings—is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). All these terms will be used interchangeably through the text.

  Students of Color. "Students of color" includes students who may identify as Black, African American, Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Latinx, Chicanx, Native American, and multiracial. The term "students of color" can be viewed by some as more positive than "non-White," which defines people based on what they are not. Other students find

"students of color" to be more similar to how they think of their own identity compared to "racial minority," which defines people based on a statistical status.

Synchronous Learning. Synchronous learning happens in real time. The teacher and the students interact in a specific online place at a set time. In this setting, instructors commonly take attendance, the same as they would as though in an in-person classroom. Common methods of synchronous online learning include video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live-streamed lessons that must be viewed in real time (Kukulska-Hulme & Pegrum, 2018).

Urban. For the purposes of this study, "urban" will be defined as schools that are public, located in a large city, racially diverse but predominantly students of color—specifically Black and Latinx—and the majority of students in the school are reported to receive free or reduced lunch (Watson, 2011). Watson's definition purposefully goes beyond euphemisms and unexamined beliefs about race and recognizes the deep divides that exist along racial and class lines. Watson encourages teachers to recognize themselves as racial beings who teach other racial beings and must self-reflect with this perspective in mind. According to Watson, understanding that the idea of teaching in an urban setting goes beyond the size and location only and focuses on the people within the urban setting is a needed next step for teachers in urban settings.

Online Settings. Online settings include any digital or online platform that is used to deliver content and instruction, both synchronously and/or asynchronously. The Alliance for Excellence in Education (2019) defines digital learning as "any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience" (p. 3). As technology transforms education, all teachers will need to leverage electronic tools and resources within their curriculum so that students can engage in authentic, collaborative work.

White Mainstream English. White Mainstream English is commonly referred to as standard English or Dominant American English (Baker-Bell, 2020) and will be used in the dissertation interchangeably with other terms such as Standard American English. The concept of academic language—also called academic English, the language of school, the language of power, or communicating in academic settings—is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to school that all students must master to be successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher decision-making process and the extent that first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. Chapter two provides a discussion of culturally- and linguistically-based practices related to teacher knowledge, skills, disposition, and practice when providing literacy instruction. This review of existing literature begins with a summary of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) publication "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (1974) to support the rationale for language equity in today's urban classrooms. This document emphasized that teaching and learning is not politically neutral (Joseph & Evans, 2018). The review of this publication leads to the exploration of the influence of English-only ideology and counters this ideology with the significance of pedagogy that prioritizes personal language identity.

From the Joseph and Evans (2018) critically conscious teachers' framework, foundations are presented as hallmarks for identifying sustaining mindsets. The goal of the authors is to challenge the long-standing history of structures of schooling and turbulent mainstream politics and develop teachers that embrace language and culture as the cornerstone from which anti-racist, anti-biased, and asset-oriented classroom communities are built. To further qualify and quantify sustaining mindsets, de Jong and Harper's (2008) dimensions are outlined as structures to identify linguistically sustaining responsiveness in literacy instructional practices among first-grade mainstream teachers in urban settings. The combination of the pedagogical ideologies and frameworks provides opportunities for critical analysis of urban classrooms. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Alim & Paris, 2017) was intentionally chosen as the centerpiece of this research to recognize the importance of the term around students' right to their own language in an education system that has perpetuated language bias for decades (Baker-Bell,

2020). This chapter concludes with a discussion on the pedagogical considerations in online settings.

Students' Right to Their Language

In fall 1974, the executive committee of the National Council of Teachers of English published through its partner organization, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), its first formal position statement titled "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (1974). This position statement was clear in prioritizing diverse heritages and dialects that respect identity over a hierarchical approach that placed Dominant American English (DAE) at the center. DAE is identified as the White, mainstream version of English and is often referred to as academic English, the language of school, the language of power (Baker-Bell, 2020), or the way of communicating in academic or formal situational settings. It is described as a register that contains lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal skills specific to students reaching proficiency to be considered successful (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). It is a discriminatory practice to measure anyone, including the young students of color in our communities, solely against the White, middle-class norms that continue to dominate notions of educational achievement. The "Students' Right to Their Own Language" position statement indicated that "The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans" (CCCC, 1974, p. 4). This position centers the mindset that is needed to culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining teacher practices.

The CCCC revised the National Language Policy in March 1988 and updated it again in 1992; the current version was revised in March 2015. Despite the publication of numerous position papers, more progress towards language equity is needed (Borden, 2014; Ladson-

Billings, 2006; Lee & Handsfield, 2018; Saunders, 2013; Zeigler & Camarota, 2018; Zentella, 2014). The existence of English-only policies and DAE as the gauge of proficiency points to a disconnect of ideology and teaching practice in U.S. education. As of January 2015, twenty-eight states have declared English their sole official language (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018), which seems contradictory to the sentiments in the CCCC statement. This legislation indicates that official government business must be conducted only in the English language and includes other restrictions, such as opposing or limiting bilingual education. In the U.S., there is the belief that these laws give citizens the right to insist on English-only language across all contexts. Court cases have increased in which parents who are not raising their child(ren) to speak English are threatened with loss of custody (Saunders, 2013), teachers who speak accented English have been fired or reassigned (Workplace Fairness, 2020), and workers who speak a language other than English on the job, including those who were hired to speak Spanish to customers, are fired for speaking Spanish to each other (Zentella, 2014). American youth are consuming these narratives of hate with too few opportunities to digest what is happening or to recognize their agency in creating meaningful change (Simmons, 2019). Simmons reports an example of English-only education policies in Arizona to introduce an education bill that will threaten teachers' jobs if they engage in any dialogue or activity that appears to advocate political, ideological, or religious positions. In the U.S. in 2020, the belief that "real" Americans speak only English continues to contribute to increased violence against speakers of other languages and people of color (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018).

English-Only Ideology

English-only efforts can be described as actions taken by "federal and state governments, lobbyists, organizations, or private citizens to make English the only or official language for use

in public or governmental situations in the U.S." (Immigration to the United States, 2015). These efforts can be perceived as anti-immigrant or racist for many reasons (Barker et al., 2001). English-only laws make day-to-day living challenging and erode civil and human rights. When government documents, ballots, and media are not available in the languages people speak, it destroys the transparency that the government owes its people—not just English-speaking people but all constituents (Barker et al., 2001). Borden (2014) explains how English-only policies make the erroneous argument that English is being displaced and thrives on paranoia and fear of immigrants. English-only ideologies negate the identity and rights of all Americans, and they negate the unique contributions of Americans from different backgrounds (Barker et al., 2001). These ideologies disparage multilingualism and multiculturalism, perpetuating the perspective that the lack of a unifying national language creates linguistic ghettos or linguistic chaos and limits immigrants' economic prospects (Borden, 2014). Borden further describes how framers of these same ideologies concede that it is acceptable to use other languages in private while they advocate to make English the official language of the United States, which would require that nearly all government documents be written—and conducted—exclusively in English. English-only movements tend to experience their greatest popularity during times of economic hardship, massive immigration, or war (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018), promoting a national cohesiveness under the banner of the English language (Barker et al., 2001).

English-only ideologies have had a large impact on language planning and policy in education (Pac, 2012). Pac explains how two popular ideologies are often at the base of language planning and policy discussions. The first is the ideology of English monolingualism, which frames policy issues through an immigrant paradigm in order to portray language diversity as an alien and divisive force. The second involves a standard language ideology that is used to

position speakers of different varieties of the same language within a social hierarchy. Barker and colleagues (2001) posit that these English-only mindsets generate policy and practices that are connected by assumptions about underlying linguistic ideologies and other social ideologies related to individualism and social mobility through education. These ideologies continue to limit and impact marginalized students disproportionately through language assessment and classification schemes (Borden, 2014). California's Proposition 227 is an example of short- and long-term ramifications that English-only ideologies have on the U.S. education system. California's Proposition 227, enacted in 1998, was the result of anti-immigrant politics and historical trends that opposed bilingual education (Pac, 2012). For twenty years, schools worked to meet the English-only mandates of Proposition 227, despite the research on language acquisition and what was known about most effective practices. Although Proposition 58, passed in 2016, repealed bilingual restrictions that Proposition 227 had put into place, the legacy of Proposition 227 lives on, affecting the instruction of English learners today (Zeigler & Camarota, 2018).

English-only ideology exists at a level that is significant enough to generate the formation and membership of many specialized extremist or hate groups (Barker et al., 2001). The Southern Poverty Law Center (2019) categorizes and publishes information on these groups and defines them as groups that vilify others because of their race, language, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity (see Southern Poverty Law Center for an extension on the discussion of the recent increase of hate groups). These English-only mindsets operate from assumptions about underlying linguistic ideologies and other social ideologies related to individualism and social mobility through education (Barker et al., 2001), which impacts marginalized students disproportionately (Borden, 2014).

Almost fifty years later, the principles captured in the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (CCCC, 1974) statement still have significant challenges to overcome for the promises of language equity to be actualized. Ladson-Billings (2006) points out that although there seems to be a volume of study on the significances of language as culture, there is rarely any kind of remedy offered to make progress toward solving the problem, and therefore the U.S. has created a sizable education debt in which language equity progress is still lacking. Awareness of the language equity issues does not seem to equate to significant noticeable progress toward systematic change in teacher practice (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and the fixation on assimilation serves to position students of color in a frame of deficit, which can have a lifetime of effect.

Divisiveness in policy, programming, and labeling when it comes to education and effective language instruction (Lee & Handsfield, 2018) still exists and is successful in slowing or stopping language equity progress. A more inclusive notion that allows the language of school (Baker-Bell, 2020) to respect linguistic diversity as a strength beyond DAE and focuses on teacher education that builds practice and pedagogy (i.e., inclusivity and asset-based programming) should be the norm in schooling for students who are speakers of nonmajoritarian languages. The terminology "speakers of nonmajoritarian languages" includes the definition associated with learners of academic English language. When language variety is not respected in schools the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color are viewed as deficiencies to be overcome (Souto-Manning, 2016). English-only laws do not just silence non-English speakers, they slowly chip away at everyone's civil and human rights (Barker et al., 2001), which is in complete opposition to the goals of culturally and linguistically sustaining teacher practice (Alim, 2016). Furthermore, denying or

delaying changes in teacher practice toward language equity perpetuates the regulatory stance, the dismissal, and the demonizing of students of color and impacts long-standing and detrimental feelings of inferiority (CCCC, 2020).

Language equity methods that are inclusive of linguistic diversity increase literacy learning and impact overall achievement outcomes (de Jong & Harper, 2008). By recognizing students' right to their own language at an early age, educators perceive their students as equally deserving of the cognitive, social, and creative benefits of multilingualism, and they respect children's human dignity and linguistic histories (Souto-Manning, 2016). The need to study the current status of teacher practices in literacy instruction that recognize and cultivate every student's personal language identity is a key consideration when assessing the progress of students' right to their own language.

Personal Language Identity

Identity consists of characteristics and qualities that make up who we are, and are formed by our environment, what we see as normal within our environment, and how we view ourselves in relation to those norms (Wortham, 2006). According to Wortham, you can adopt or develop any number of identities (i.e., writer, teacher, student, etc.), which are built on perceived models of what it means to be categorized as one of these identities. Wortham further explains that these identities can also have sub-identities (good/bad, professional, novice, etc.).

With consideration towards literacy, Brown (2011) describes reading identities as being based upon what an individual thinks of themselves (i.e., a student) or what others project onto another (i.e., a teacher to a student). Reading identities are the perceived capabilities that every individual holds. These perceptions are based on how students understand themselves as readers within a given text, are created at an early age and reinforced (or disrupted) over time, and are

often constructed in terms of skills. Wortham (2006) notes that it is important to remember that students and teachers may not be in alignment with how they identify themselves.

Reading identities are complicated and form over time based on experiences in school, understandings of different reading identities that exist, and through the language that students hear about reading and what it means to be a reader (Brown, 2011). Brown explains how students form their identities with regular negative or positive experiences over time, and based on those experiences, they may categorize themselves as *good* or *bad*. These categorizations lead students to build a perception about themselves, which is further enforced (or disrupted) based on the language that is used with them (by teachers, peers, and/or family members). Over time, students' thoughts and behaviors (Brown, 2011) are shaped by what they are taught to believe and what they hear from educators who have positionality and power to quantify student proficiency. Students that are in classrooms where they are taught to abandon their cultural language for academic language may categorize their language as bad or not good enough. Practices such as code-switching places Whiteness and White mainstream English on a pedestal while suggesting nonmajoritarian languages are inferior, lesser, and secondary. According to Baker-Bell (2019), in addition to code-switching, another practice that can occur regularly in classrooms under the umbrella of *academic language* is tone-policing. Tone-policing minimizes the speech of marginalized people and may appear harmless, but correcting grammar or spelling in the middle of a discussion is derailing asset-based methods (Simmons, 2019). Tone-policing causes a distraction from the content of the message that is being conveyed, even though the spirit of the message was understood, and redirects the focus on the incorrect use of White conventions while shaming the speaker (Baker-Bell, 2020). Instruction that is inclusive of all cultural identities counters DAE and English-only ideologies.

These perceptions play out in literacy experiences and the ways students interact with text, how they contribute to class discussions, and how they perform in reading assessment scores (Wortham, 2006). Students tend to get assigned to reading identities (by teachers, peers, and family members), and students acquire or adopt the habits that are associated with a given identity (Brown, 2011). According to Brown, these reading identities influence academic literacy development through the ways students talk about text, read text, and apply skills and strategies when reading texts.

When talking about text, students with negative reading identities have the tendency to limit their talk are more likely to remain silent during class discussions, or they may speak only when they are absolutely confident that they know the correct answer (Wortham, 2006). Wortham states that when talking about texts, students with positive reading identities are more likely to speak often, volunteer more often to share their thoughts or ask questions, and are more likely to take risks. Wortham further notes that when reading texts and applying strategies, students with negative reading identities may give up on reading when they have difficulty, limit how they apply strategies during reading, and may be less mindful. Wortham (2006) compares this to students with positive reading identities who are more likely to stick with difficult texts and are mindful more often when selecting and applying reading strategies.

To build positive reading identities and more confident, successful learners, teachers must have self-awareness and purposefully foster it in their students as part of reading instruction. Self-awareness—the ability to recognize one's emotions, thoughts, and values—is a crucial skill for understanding others and the world (Simmons, 2019). There is a strong and complex link between identity, literacy, and language use in the classroom (Evans, 2020). Simmons (2019) explains that self-awareness approaches should be used by teachers to

encourage students to reflect on how their identity hinders or enhances their life opportunities. In today's increasingly diverse and culturally complex classrooms (NCES, 2020), school environments should be recognized as pluralistic learning spaces that are rich with a variety of languages, dialects, regionalisms, registers, and other linguistic variations, which are representative of the diverse student population.

Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Approaches

As Paris and Alim (2014) suggest through culturally sustaining pedagogies, classrooms are filled with the children who are a part of a pluralistic society, and every classroom teacher must include practices that respect and build from a broad variation of linguistic diversity. Culturally aware educators understand that embracing a pluralistic society means altering the traditional practices and ways of measuring proficiency to include a broader scope beyond the White middle-class norms that linger as a dominating force when dictating educational achievement (Baker-Bell, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Education and schooling have been rooted in traditional practices and ways of measuring proficiency based on single voices, standardization, and White cultural norms, which is the basis of DAE. This is not just true for students with a home language other than English, but for students with home and community variations of English. In the publication *This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!* (CCCC, 2020), the authors state that teachers must explicitly be aware of these traditional norms and work to break away from them through their instructional practices. Baker-Bell (2020) suggests that teachers become champions of linguistic justice and explicitly oppose negative perceptions by rejecting the use of linguistic ideologies that perpetuate hate, shaming, and spirit murdering (Johnson et al., 2017).

Racial and Linguistic Justice

Understanding the socio-psychological foundations of language learning is important for teachers so that they can respond to a range of student attitudes, motivations, and behaviors (Souto-Manning, 2016). English Language Arts classrooms should be places of humanization and racial justice, and teachers of literacy must examine how media reinforces White supremacist and anti-Blackness ideologies to offer pedagogies of healing as tools to investigate, dismantle, and rewrite the damaging narratives of mainstream perspectives (Baker-Bell et al., 2017).

One of the most insidious forms of damage that occurs (seldom talked about) is the linguistic violence that is perpetuated, particularly upon students who speak languages other than English in the home (Hendriks, 2017). Hendriks explains how the linguistic violence that is inflicted upon non-English-dominant students begins in kindergarten, where the language skills that students bring from home are deemed deficient and the colloquial forms of English or languages other than English are systematically stripped from the students. Hendriks (2017) suggests that instead of teachers undoing the language mistakes learned at home or sanitizing the contaminated varieties of language that students bring to class, what is needed are language policies that are responsive to the identity and linguistic needs of all students and that these policies draw from their lived experiences as a source of knowledge. This cannot be done as long as school systems continue to view students' home language practices as broken and see schools as the place where it can be fixed. Further, as long as teachers have rules that students must speak like an American to obtain proficiency, linguistic justice will not be achieved (Hendriks, 2017). Teachers must develop an understanding of the linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization that speakers endure when using their language in schools

and in everyday life (Baker-Bell, 2019). Deficit-orientated instructional practices—including teachers' silencing, correcting, and policing students (CCCC, 2020)—that injure the psyche and self-esteem of students of color when they communicate in nonmajoritarian languages, must be reversed with bold instruction moves by practicing educators. According to the CCCC (2020) statement, teachers must showcase their students' histories and authentic experiences as the norm for teaching and learning; otherwise, teachers are denying students of color the right to use their native language as a linguistic resource during their language and literacy learning. According to Baker-Bell (2019), if teachers do not take this stance, they are equating proficiency with the culture of White Mainstream English, or DAE, and conditioning Black students to reject their language and code-switch to avoid discrimination. According to Baker-Bell (2019), teachers must operate from the awareness that behaviors that devalue an individual's language are destructive and injurious and ignore the interconnections among language, race, and identity.

The Value of Language Variation

A devaluing of language and culture leads to assumptions of acculturation—or assimilation to the dominant culture (Valenzuela, 2016). Without taking into consideration the sociocultural and sociopolitical pressures that may lead to different acculturation patterns, mainstream teachers may assume that the process of acculturation is linear and simply a matter of choice (de Jong & Harper, 2008) and therefore default to the norms of DAE (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). Built upon decades of significant asset-based pedagogical research (Banks, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995), CSP has opposed deficit approaches, working against the White superiority background and systemic racism to validate that the practices and ways of being and communicating for students of color are legitimate and should be included meaningfully in classroom learning (Paris & Alim, 2014). Rickford and Rickford (2000) and Smitherman (1995),

observe that "The learning of standard English has historically been obligatory despite our knowledge that linguistic shaming and dismissal of [nonmajoritarian languages have] a deleterious effect on [nonmajoritarian languages] speakers' humanity" (as cited in Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2020, para. 9). This observation centers the value of language variation.

Kiesling (2011) explains that every individual has their own intraspeaker and interspeaker variations, and the term "linguistic variation" (or simply "variation") refers to regional, social, or contextual differences in the ways that a particular language is used. Variation *between* languages, dialects, and speakers is known as "interspeaker variation," and variation *within* the language of a single speaker is called "intraspeaker variation" (Kiesling, 2011). R. L. Trask (2007) notes that language variation is a vital part of ordinary linguistic behavior and impacts all speakers. All aspects of language (including phonemes, morphemes, syntactic structures, and meanings) are subject to variation (Klingebiel, 2007). Wolfram and Ward (2006) argue that everyone speaks a dialect of English, and the idea of a standard English, in which some speak "correctly" and others do not, is linguistically inaccurate. Teachers must have an awareness of this knowledge and use it to inform their decision making when determining teaching and learning experiences to ensure a sustaining approach (Alim & Paris, 2017). According to Joseph and Evans (2018), "We are in a historical, sociocultural, and political moment that esteems the mainstream English American paradigm, while rich cultural and linguistic origins of knowledge that continue to fortify this nation are devalued" (p. 53). To fully embrace these cultural and linguistic ideologies, teachers must be educated and invested to operate from frameworks oriented in culture and language.

Conceptual Frameworks Oriented in Culture and Language

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) establishes a foundation when partnered with the theory and research of the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework, from which teachers can examine decisions that impact language use and integrated language development. The critically conscious teacher education framework has been developed to be proactive in building the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in preservice teachers and realizes the call for action central to critical and transformative teacher preparation (Joseph & Evans, 2018). According to Joseph and Evans, the foundations of the framework are essential learnings that build a solid identity for teachers who educate bilingual/multilingual learners. In tandem with the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018), the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework identifies areas of expertise that are needed for practicing mainstream teachers with native and non-native English speakers. The de Jong and Harper (2008) framework is complementary to the Joseph and Evans (2018) framework as it gives explicit attention to the linguistic and cultural needs of speakers of nonmajoritarian languages that is lacking in most teacher preparation programs (Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

Critically Conscious Teachers

Joseph and Evans (2018) ground the critically conscious teacher preparation framework in the work of sociocultural-constructivist (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Valenzuela, 2016) perspectives. According to Joseph and Evans, the framework's sociocultural-constructivist orientation indicates that we learn best through our engagement with others, and then this new information is incorporated into the belief systems of the individual, which shapes future interactions with others. Critical race theory provides a lens

for critical inspection of education decision making, policies, and practices embedded in historical, sociocultural, and political contexts (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Joseph and Evans explain that the critical race theory lens offers the opportunity to analyze racist and discriminatory practices, challenge dominant ideologies, and consider transformative actions within education systems. Although Joseph and Evans (2018) present the critically conscious teacher preparation framework as a preservice model, for this study it was used as a structure to understand practicing mainstream teachers' knowledge and belief systems. The critically conscious framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) provides these four foundations: (a) establishing critically conscious pedagogy, (b) disrupting historical regression, (c) revitalizing the democratic values of public education, and (d) becoming advocates and action-oriented practitioners. The critically conscious teacher framework has the intention of moving teachers toward a critically conscious teacher identity (see Figure 3)—one that is grounded in the four foundations. Each of the foundations has integral links that form a strong outer circle. The outer circle (the four foundations) impacts the development of the central, and very significant, inner core (critically conscious teacher identity). The center core cannot exist without the outer foundations solidly intact within a critically conscious teacher education program.

Figure 3

Critically Conscious Pedagogy Framework
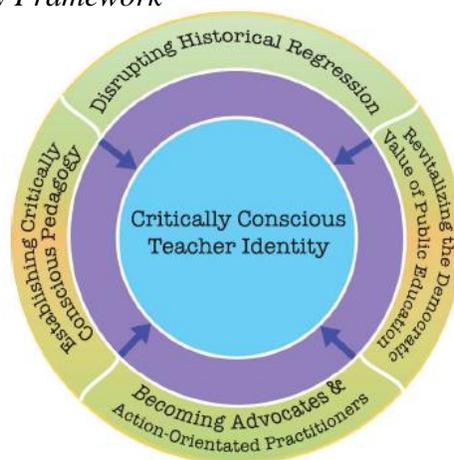
Foundation 1: Establishing Critically Conscious Pedagogy. Students, families and communities deserve experiences that are grounded in equity and excellence in the day-to-day, structural, institutional, and ideological hurdles that perpetuate inequities for students marginalized in mainstream, English-oriented systems (Joseph & Evans, 2018). According to Joseph and Evans, critically conscious teachers challenge power relations and inequities of English-oriented systems and operate from a multilingual perspective that strategically and purposefully offers alternatives to mainstream paradigms and understand cultural pluralism as the norm. They highlight the need for many teachers to recognize that they may be experiencing cultural and linguistic diversity for the first time and they will need to actively challenge their predispositions to the mainstream, White-normed schooling experiences (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is not enough by itself for achievement in educational contexts where increasing the student achievement is a national goal (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Lucas and Villegas (2013) stress the importance of preparing linguistically responsive teachers for increasingly diverse student populations. Linguistically responsive teaching (LRT) is established by Lucas and Villegas (2013) and involves two major components: (a) orientations of linguistically responsive teachers and (b) knowledge and skills of linguistically responsive teachers. The Joseph and Evans (2018) Foundation 1 is an extension of the work of Lucas and Villegas (2013) and builds from methods that focus specifically on the linguistically responsive preparation of teachers.

The Linguistically Responsive Teaching (LRT) framework (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) offers three types of pedagogical expertise that mainstream teachers must embrace to become a linguistically responsive teacher (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). These types include familiarity with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds, an understanding of language demands that go

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along with learning tasks, and the skillful implementation of appropriate scaffolding are the three

pedagogical shifts that mainstream teachers must practice during planning and providing

instruction (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). The first part of LRT focuses on preparing teachers for

their understanding of students' backgrounds, areas of interests, and proficiencies; their ability to

identify language demands within the curriculum; their application of key principles of second-

language learning; and their proficiency in guiding students and scaffolding instruction (Lucas &

Villegas, 2013). Additionally, LRT highlights linguistic responsiveness, including sociolinguistic

consciousness, value for language and diversity, and cultivating the desire to champion on behalf

of students (Joseph & Evans, 2018). According to Joseph and Evans, developing these

dispositions in teacher preparation connects language, culture, and identity, which is essential for

teachers who instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Foundation 2: Disrupting Historical Regression. The second foundation of critically

conscious pedagogy is framed from the traditions and impact of colonialism, language-restrictive

ideologies, and historical regression (Joseph & Evans, 2018). When applied to this work,

historical regression is a concept that explains how schooling issues of segregation,

discrimination, resource inequalities, and subtractive practices (not asset-based) continually pull

at equity-reform measures instead of moving forward (Joseph & Evans, 2018). A pertinent

definition bases the ideas of ". . . historical regression as a backslide into inequitable practices in

history that have been challenged by many as indefensible and unjust for speakers of

nonmajoritarian languages" (Joseph & Evans, 2018, p. 57). The concept of historical regression

is supported by research from scholars who acknowledge patterns of power imbalance,

exclusion, and oppression (Flores, 2016; Orelus, 2013; Valdés, 1997) as barriers to equity and

cultural ways of being. Joseph and Evans (2018) propose that teacher education programs use

multiple exemplars of historical accounts to prepare all mainstream teachers so that they are compelled and confident in their abilities to interrogate policies and disrupt ideologies that divide and oppress. Furthermore, they suggest that historical examinations are selected to provide insights into individuals and communities whose experiences of inequities can inspire and serve as a model in present equity work.

  Foundation 3: Revitalizing the Democratic Values of Public Education. The principles targeted in Foundation 3 (Joseph & Evans, 2018) center on advocacy for democratic values to be the guideposts of public education. As the Institute for Democratic Education in America describes, democratic education incorporates the values of meaningful participation, personal initiative, and equality and justice for all into the classroom (Schroeder, 2017) and students and teachers in a democratic classroom must constantly negotiate the complexities of democratic life. Schroeder explains that democratic classrooms should be participatory and characterized by student choice, action, and deliberation. Deliberative classrooms promote discussion and generally see difference as a virtue. A focus on advocacy with democratic values as the mission is significant because assumptions about democracy through social justice may not necessarily be synonymous with public education (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Spaces must be created, and teachers must be prepared in the ways of critical analysis, social change, and how these are tenets of a democratic, inclusive education system (Bartolomé, 2004; Freire, 2005). In order for this foundation to impact teacher practice, Joseph and Evans (2018) explain that teachers must understand the importance of public education by forming a critical view of the history of public education and important critical issues related to teachers' rights and student equity movements and by highlighting the multiple perspectives that exist in public education. According to Joseph and Evans, and as a counterpart to disrupting historical regression, the U.S.

public education system has been a system saturated with oppression, marginalization, and hatred. The goals of critically conscious teaching should be to re-establish the true nature of democratic values as the guiding principles of our public school systems, where those in power determine the quality and opportunity of schooling available under particular rules of inclusion and exclusion, and where teachers can establish a critically conscious pedagogy (Joseph & Evans, 2018).

Foundation 4: Becoming Advocates and Action-Oriented Practitioners. Joseph and Evans (2018) created Foundation 4 with a focus on advocacy—both within the classroom and beyond. Considering the nature of the current political time, it is the duty of the teacher to understand advocacy, know what it looks like, and determine how they can take on the role of an advocate for students, particularly those who have been marginalized (Joseph & Evans, 2018) so that the White, dominant view in teaching and learning is repositioned to embrace the cultural practices of communities of color as assets, rather than deficits, in classroom learning, which is known as asset pedagogies (Alim & Paris, 2017). Joseph and Evans (2018) believe it is essential that teacher education programs should be grounded in social change and become bidirectional spaces where students can move outside into the field to experience the dynamics of today's classroom while reflecting, rehearsing, and shaping their teacher identity. Beyond the classroom, teachers should be educated in the ways that the current education climate allows teachers to draw from the past to find new solutions, which includes the role of the federal and state governments in education. Joseph and Evans (2018) suggest that teachers learn about the micropolitics of education in the study of politics surrounding schools, districts, and communities, including influential figures and current issues in the world of teaching and learning.

The critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) upholds the significance of developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for urban, mainstream teachers of literacy focused on linguistically responsive and sustaining practices. It captures key foundations for teacher mindset and practice and connects to the underlying tenets of the work of de Jong and Harper. Together, these ideals provide solid steps for enhancing teacher practice and ensuring that culturally and linguistically sustaining practices become the norm in our urban classrooms.

The de Jong and Harper Framework

The de Jong and Harper framework identifies areas of expertise necessary for mainstream teachers to be prepared to teach in classrooms with native and non-native English speakers. De Jong and Harper believe that all teachers must be provided with the experiences to develop additional knowledge and skills related to the domains of language and culture in order to be effective in integrated classrooms. This perspective goes beyond the application of "just good teaching" practices that were intended for native English speakers, such as activating prior knowledge, using cooperative learning, process writing, and employing graphic organizers or hands-on activities (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Typical discussions in education assume that English language- and U.S.-based cultural experiences are the norm for all students. However, a "just good teaching" approach (de Jong & Harper, 2005) does not address the needs of the diverse students who fill urban classrooms (Vásquez et al., 2013), notably similar to the ones included in this study. According to de Jong (2016), teachers must develop the knowledge and skills to actively engage in language practices that reflect an asset and additive stance; they need to critically analyze their mainstream context and understand where mainstream policies and practices are inappropriate and insufficient for a diverse cultural and linguistic classroom setting.

To illustrate this further, the national content standards describe the disciplinary knowledge base of the content area and good teaching practices but do not explain the linguistic foundation underlying these effective content classrooms (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Thus, it would be expected that many teachers are not equipped with this perspective. Classrooms have increasing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners (NCES, 2020) and the "just good teaching" approach (de Jong & Harper, 2005) does not address the specific needs of these language-diverse/pluralistic classrooms. According to Paris (2016), the "just good teaching" approach encourages a generic approach to teaching that does not account for linguistic and cultural diversity, which ignores the needs of students of color. While building a more diverse teacher workforce, culturally responsive professional learning for all teachers, including the majority who are White, must be implemented. To effectively meet the needs of speakers of nonmajoritarian languages, de Jong and Harper (2005) have argued that mainstream teachers must gain specific knowledge and skills, or expertise, related to language and culture (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Enhanced Mainstream Teacher Expertise for Bilingual Learners by de Jong and Harper (2005)
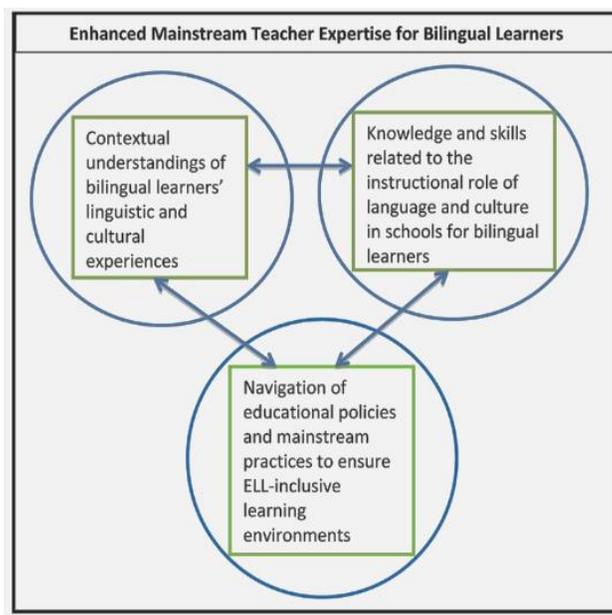
There are three dimensions to the de Jong and Harper framework: (a) process, (b) medium, and (c) goals to represent the knowledge and skills connected to language and culture (de Jong and Harper, 2005).

Figure 5 depicts the three dimensions of enhanced mainstream expertise as presented by de Jong and Harper (2008), which assists the teacher in moving from a blanket approach of teaching and learning to an asset-based approach based on the role of language and culture in teaching and learning. The framework outlines the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect an awareness of three dimensions: the process of learning a second language, the role of language and culture as a medium in teaching and learning, and the need to set explicit linguistic, and cultural goals (de Jong & Harper, 2008).

Figure 5

The Nature of the Knowledge and Skill Gap for Mainstream Teachers of ELLs (de Jong and Harper, 2008)
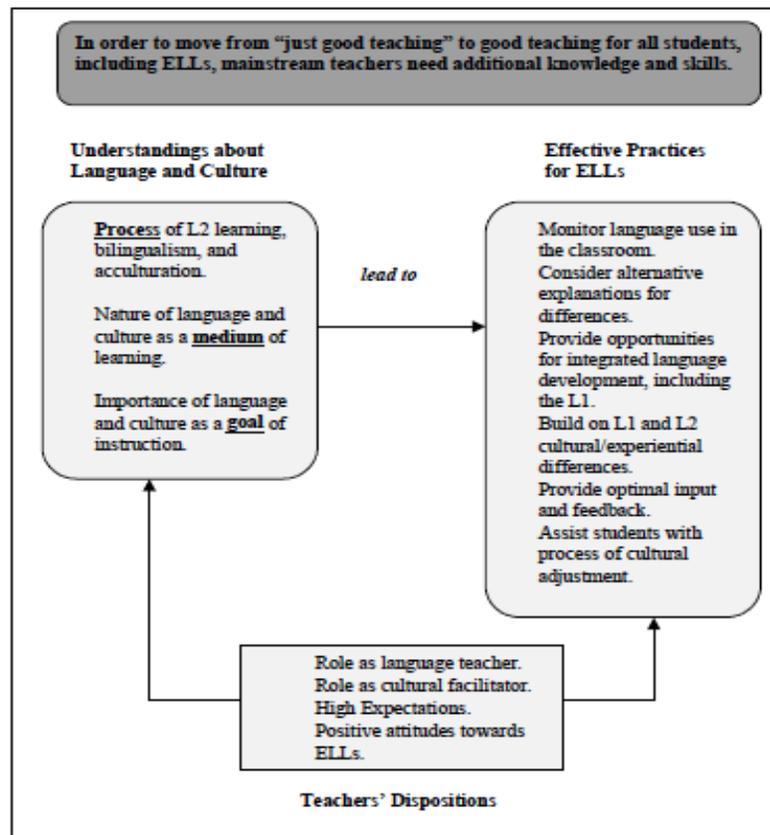
Dimension One: The Process. The *process* dimension of the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework underscores the processes of language acquisition and acculturation, including similarities and differences between languages. Additionally, it focuses on the need for teachers to understand how multilingual processes are manifested through oral and literacy development and how teaching and learning experiences should build on students' language assets. This part of the framework addresses the need for the technical understanding of the science related to developmental literacy and language learning for students who exist in a pluralistic and diverse society. Karabenick and Noda (2004) report that teachers lacked basic foundational knowledge about English learners' issues despite the fact that 88% of the teachers taught ELs. Considering that mainstream teachers in urban settings are predominantly White, middle-class, female, monolingual, and English-speaking (NCES, 2020), there is a need to build-in formal education for teachers that specifically addresses culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Mainstream teachers need to be able to interpret bilingual/multilingual phenomena appropriately and use students' current language capacity as a resource for learning (Souto-Manning, 2016). It is critical for teachers to understand the implications for their classroom practices and how to actively build understanding; through knowledge, mainstream teachers can plan for teaching and learning opportunities with language as a centerpiece of literacy.

Dimension Two: The Medium. The second dimension of the framework (de Jong & Harper, 2008), the *medium,* is based on heightened awareness of the role that language and culture play as a conduit in teaching and learning. From a cultural lens, teachers need to understand how expectations and opportunities for learning are filtered through culturally based assumptions regarding classroom expectations for literacy that may not be common among all

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students (Evans, 2020). The importance of an asset-based approach allows students and

educators to articulate experiences using cultural assets (Yosso, 2005) to guide academic

engagement. Mainstream teachers serve students of color more effectively when they have

formal education and ongoing professional development that includes an anti-racist approach to

language teaching and learning (Baker-Bell, 2019). Teachers also become more attuned to the

ways that mainstream teachers lack knowledge about students of color, including

nonmajoritarian languages (Lee, 2017). Classroom teachers should consciously work to inform

their practice and create safe learning environments for all students to understand diverse forms

of language (Baker-Bell, 2019; de Jong, 2016; Souto-Manning, 2016; Vásquez et al., 2013). To

operate from a mindset that is purposefully and respectfully inclusive of what has been

historically categorized as *language-minority student* mainstream teachers engage in the

recursive process of valuing language by building knowledge of the instructional role of

language and culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Dimension Three: Goals. The third dimension of de Jong and Harper's (2008)

framework emphasizes the need to set explicit language goals. One principle that mainstream

teachers can implement immediately is creating and posting language objectives for their lessons

(Beeman & Urow, 2012). According to Beeman and Urow (2012), many teachers are familiar

with using content objectives to identify what students will learn and be able to do in the lesson,

but they are less likely to include language objectives that support the linguistic development of

their students. Implementing language objectives can be a powerful step, and it is beneficial for

all students in a class as everyone can benefit from the clarity that comes with a teacher outlining

the requisite academic language to be learned and achieved in each lesson (Beeman & Urow,

2012; Vásquez et al., 2013). Language objectives are lesson objectives that specifically outline

the type of language that students will need to learn and use to accomplish the goals of the lesson (Beeman & Urow, 2012). Beeman and Urow state that language objectives complement the content knowledge and skills identified in content-area standards and address the aspects of academic language that will be developed or reinforced during the teaching of grade-level content concepts and involve the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

To further extend the importance of language goals as a part of literacy learning, it is relevant to consider the diverse demographics of urban classrooms and the many ways the linguistic and cultural assets of students of color can improve instruction. Acknowledging that urban districts have high populations of students of color, a useful extension to the goal dimension of the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework is the addition of learning objectives and goals that evolve from teacher understanding of nonmajoritarian languages (Baker-Bell, 2019). Developing teacher practice by including explicit cultural and linguistic goals that grow from the mindset of *sustaining* language versus a stance that positions standard English and academic language as the equivalent to success (Baker-Bell, 2019) fulfills the objective and enriches the learning environment.

According to the CCCC's (2020) *This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!*, teachers must stop policing language practices of students of color and stop penalizing them for using the language practices in the classroom. The CCCC statement offers several shifts that teachers can make to stop utilizing eradicationist and respectability pedagogies (Baker-Bell, 2020) that diminish language practices of students of color and work to curricularize (Paris, 2016) language diversity. In addition, the CCCC statement (2020) demands that teachers receive professional development to recognize racism in their curriculum, instruction, and pedagogical practices; stop promoting and privileging White mainstream

English, such as requiring students to code-switch. These long-standing practices are detrimental to students of color and fail to recognize that multiple languages can coexist (Young et al., 2014). Further, the CCCC statement (2020) demands that this shift in teacher practice requires that all students get an opportunity to learn about nonmajoritarian languages from nonmajoritarian languages scholars or experts (i.e., via texts, lectures, etc.). For instance, it is imperative that students of color learn nonmajoritarian languages through nonmajoritarian languages scholars and that they learn the rich roots and rhetorical rules of nonmajoritarian languages (Baker-Bell, 2020), which include ineffectual language arts instruction that wrongfully limits the proficiency to White mainstream English standards (CCCC, 2020). Considering how these approaches would affect the learning goals and objectives that teachers produce, teachers can make *sustaining* strides visible in classroom practice and make progress toward language equity.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) is defined by Alim and Paris (2017) as teaching and learning that "seeks to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 85). CSP recognizes ever-evolving cultural and linguistic dexterity as a positive contribution to literacy achievement, and it "sees the outcome of learning as additive, versus subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than filling deficits" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 12).

Over the past twenty-five years, CSP pedagogical research has included and built upon the funds of knowledge scholarship (Moll & Gonzales, 1994), the pedagogical third space (Gutiérrez, 2008), and notably the pioneering origination of culturally relevant pedagogy of

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). It is the changing and evolving demographic, cultural, and social

needs paired with the persistence and increase of deficit-framed policies and practices (e.g., K–

12 ethnic studies bans, English-only laws, state and national standards based on monocultural

and monolingual outcomes, disproportional school discipline, and push-out statistics) that

sustaining the valued practices and ways of being of students of color necessary in the current

context (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Built upon decades of significant asset-based pedagogical research (Banks, 2015;

Ladson-Billings, 1995), CSP has opposed deficit approaches, working against the White

superiority background and systemic racism to validate that the practices and ways of being and

communicating for students of color are legitimate and should be included meaningfully in

classroom learning (Paris & Alim, 2014). Referring back to the Conference on College

Composition and Communication (1974) policy statement, socially constructed terms such as

academic language and standard English are rooted in White supremacy, Whiteness, and anti-

Blackness and contribute to anti-Black policies (e.g., English-only) that are codified and enacted

to privilege White linguistic and cultural norms while deeming nonmajoritarian languages

inferior (CCCC, 2020).

Asset-based pedagogy, such as CSP, seeks to sustain personal student identity through

the student's right to their own language, which progress has shown is still a monumental shift in

previous practice for many educators (Delpit, 1988). In an asset-based approach, diversity in

thought, culture, and traits is viewed as a positive asset, and teachers and students alike are

valued for what they bring to the classroom rather than being characterized by what they may

need to work on or lack (Souto-Manning, 2016). Rather, these facets of students' selves and

communities must be centered meaningfully in classroom learning across units and projects

(Baker-Bell, 2020). It is acknowledged that White language norms are not necessary to endorse proficiency for students of color, and in fact, a purposeful move away from those educator belief systems is necessary to protect identity and literacy growth, specifically for students of color. Many students of color alter what has traditionally been the culture, including language, of the ruling class, stretching the limitations of standard language (Baker-Bell, 2019). Cultural language is a code of communication; it reverses the power of the dominant culture and its linguistic colonization (Alim, 2011).

Emphasizing the S in CSP. CSP theory aims to develop the mindset of educators so that they refuse to label behaviors that deviate from the norm as abnormal or problematic (Alim & Paris, 2017). The *S* in CSP represents the notion of *sustaining*, and it emphasizes the end goal for students of color to advocate for and harness the power of their own language. It stands for having teachers reject negative perceptions of non-dominant American English to stop the use of racist linguistic ideologies that perpetuate hate, shaming, and spirit murdering (Johnson et al., 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017) of non-majoritarian languages (CCCC, 2020). The focus on *sustaining* is a purposeful extension by Alim and Paris (2017) of previous ideologies and/or frameworks and indicates how former approaches have unintentionally reinforced teaching and learning practices that valued the attainment of White language norms while perpetuating linguistic shaming and linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020). Despite what has been learned by language research over time, the pervasiveness of beliefs in White, monolingual, and monocultural superiority still go largely unchallenged in the field of teacher education (Alim & Paris, 2017; Baker-Bell, 2020). Furthermore, Paris and Alim (2014) argue that asset-based ideology and associated frameworks have suffered from three common shortcomings. These shortcomings include the use of assimilative goals, a lack of understanding about the dynamic

nature of culture, and uncritical approaches to meaningfully including the practices and beliefs of students of color (Alim & Paris, 2017). The shift to *sustaining* practices addresses these deficits and seeks to move away from the narrowness of current achievement measurements. The change to sustaining includes moving from teacher practices and pedagogies that were ingrained with terms such as "tolerance," "diversity," and "inclusion" to curricularizing asset-based approaches (Paris, 2016). The goal of CSP is to shift teacher mindset and practice toward asset pedagogies that use sustaining approaches versus assimilative practices that position the inclusion of cultural ways of knowing by students of color as a bridge toward more effective practices and knowledge, therefore not fundamentally perpetuating the curricularization of racism (Alim & Paris, 2017).

CSP-oriented frameworks are useful pedagogies for educators when they have built an understanding and embed these frameworks as a way of providing instruction, especially for teachers who are not the same race and/or ethnicity as their students (i.e., the overrepresentation of White teachers). The setting in which this dissertation takes place is an optimal backdrop to investigate the current landscape related to CSP-oriented educators and their level of impact on sustaining specific literacy practices. Paris (2016) further describes that the goal of CSP must include the following:

> . . . an understanding that humanizing relationships of dignity and care are fundamental to student and teacher learning. That is, they engage teaching in ways that allow teachers and students to foster complex understandings about each other that disrupt damage centered deficit views. (p. 8)

Teachers who embody the ideology of CSP are more likely to recognize the many opportunities that exist in applying language-equity teaching and learning approaches but also realize that the

universal CSP approach recognizes the need to simultaneously understand the differences

between languages (Souto-Manning, 2016). CSP-oriented teachers actively develop a deeper

knowledge of the nuances and rules that govern each language to operate from an understanding

that every language is an asset without prioritizing or pushing for conversion to White language

norms. A crucial element of educating linguistically sustaining teachers is to create consistency

across the field of teacher education in both preparation and ongoing professional learning with

an explicit focus on linguistic responsiveness (Alim & Paris, 2017). An issue that has led to this

lack of critical analysis and racial and cultural integration in teaching is that sometimes there is a

tendency to isolate teaching skills, strategies, and pedagogical moves from the political,

ideological, and moral commitments on which such practices are grounded (Paris, 2016).

To fully embrace CSP, urban mainstream educators must have background knowledge

and an ongoing intrinsic desire to understand the current research as well as the historical context

that prepares them to value students of color and to see them as whole and human (Alim & Paris,

2017). Paris (2016) suggests that CSP cannot happen if a teacher does not value young students

of color or if a deficit mindset exists. Today's urban mainstream teachers should develop

understanding of the history of language bias and work toward embracing the ideals outlined in

the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) "Students' Right to Their

Own Language" (1974) statement, the critically conscious teacher preparation foundations

(Joseph & Evans (2018), and the de Jong and Harper framework (2005) in order to consider

themselves effective teachers of literacy. Over the years, researchers have created teacher

frameworks to further propel CSP, specifically focusing on language, with the goal of assisting

teachers to examine language use in the classroom, integrate language development and

cultural/experiential differences for all languages, and create processes for cultural inclusion.

CSP Language and Literacy Strategies. Practices orientated in CSP are recognizable because they invite and encourage students to not only use their cultural practices from home in school, but to maintain them in the classroom. Teachers can implement culturally and linguistically sustaining strategies that embrace students' language by building oracy or using listening and speaking activities as a prerequisite to reading and writing (Beeman & Urow, 2012). Teachers that know about the students and their family backgrounds or their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) recognize that the funds are the linguistic and cultural assets that students and families bring to the learning environment (Hamayan et al., 2013). Teachers with CSP frames create linguistic inclusivity by using the students' funds of knowledge and believing that students who speak nonmajoritarian languages can perform at high levels.

To build literacy outcomes from the funds of knowledge perspective (González et al., 2005), teachers oriented in CSP (Alim & Paris, 2017) regularly incorporate scaffolded instruction to build academic language use (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2017) without an emphasis on assimilation to DAE. Scaffolding strategies that are taught, practiced, and reinforced with students assist them in the learning process (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2017) during literacy instruction. Successful scaffolding strategies that teachers can use during literacy instruction are modeling (Souto-Manning, 2016), bridging (Beeman & Urow, 2012), schema building (Beeman & Urow, 2012), contextualization (Lee & Handsfield, 2018; Morell, 2012; Vásquez et al., 2013), text representation (Lee & Handsfield, 2018; Morrell, 2012), and metacognition (Beeman & Urow, 2012). Examples of these literacy strategies include the following:

- Modeling: Walking students through an interaction before the teacher releases the students to conduct the interaction on their own. The teacher provides students

with examples of vocabulary usage, language forms and conventions, and linguistic complexity (Souto-Manning, 2016).

● Bridging: The teacher promotes a connection between new concepts and language and previous knowledge through contrastive analysis to show similarities and differences (Beeman & Urow, 2012).

● Schema building: The teacher assists students in ways to organize knowledge and understanding (e.g., previewing a text and using advanced organizers). The teacher might provide advanced organizers that are pre-filled to help students who may struggle with writing and listening at the same time (Beeman & Urow, 2012).

● Contextualization: Teachers embed new language in sensory experiences through the use of realia, manipulatives, graphic representations, and verbal analogies to explain text and activate the five senses throughout the teaching and learning process (Vásquez et al., 2013). This is critical as textbooks are decontextualized (Lee & Handsfield, 2018).

● Text representation: The teacher recreates concepts and language from one genre to another. For example, the teacher can represent information from a math textbook in an email, transform a scientific experiment into an essay, or dance a series of steps to show a pattern in history (Lee & Handsfield, 2018; Morrell, 2012).

● Metacognition: The teacher models reflecting aloud on the processes involved while engaging in an activity by talking out loud about how one is thinking about

the task while doing it; e.g., "First, I . . . , then, I . . . , last, I . . ." or "I did . . . , I thought about . . . , and then I decided to . . ." (Beeman & Urow, 2012).

CSP celebrates student diversity through literacy and sustains and solidifies the importance of these diversities in our society. Pedagogy that is relevant to the students' lives in the classroom must propel teachers to notice color and culture in order to best educate students (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Paris (2012) pushed this idea to the next step, calling for pedagogy to not only reflect students' lives but to "perpetuate and foster" their cultures (p. 93).

Pedagogical Considerations in Online Settings

As noted in Chapter 1, this study was altered to conduct research from in-person or face-to-face classrooms to online settings to accommodate the unforeseen circumstances that were a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced an entirely new way of conducting the business of school for the large urban district featured in this study related to internet and technology access, or connectivity (Morrell, 2012).

Although this expedited shift to online learning was unpreventable, it is possible that the online format will be a necessary school configuration from this point forward. Based on this understanding, there is both an immediate need to account for culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy in online settings as well as long-term implications that impact teacher preparation, practice, and professional learning beyond the pandemic. The progression of urban mainstream teachers as they navigate the landscape of the communicative potential and preparation of students—while fully building, respecting, and sustaining language diversity in online platforms—must be understood. The online setting allows for the stance that additional positive data regarding culturally and linguistically sustaining practices can be gained, and analyzing the effect of the online setting is an opportunity. It has been noted in this review of

literature that the complexities of language and literacy teaching and learning expertise and approaches may not be a strong point for many mainstream teachers in face-to-face settings (de Jong & Harper, 2008), so an online setting could add a secondary layer of unfamiliarity. The critically conscious teacher (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) frameworks provide opportunities for planning and preparing teachers for culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining practices. Although these frameworks do not specifically address online settings, these perspectives can transfer in the reflection and growth experiences that occur during the sudden shift to an online setting and the long-term effects that will become a part of the future educational landscape. Considerations for how the online setting affects, or does not affect, the ability to adopt the mindset and implement in practice the ideals within the frameworks are dynamic and rely on the conditions of support that teachers receive. Although the pandemic was a catalyst for the expedited shift to the online setting, the structure and forums of education are forever changed, and an exploration of online settings and the implications is a worthwhile inquiry.

How Pedagogy Is Affected in Online Settings

The relative success or failure of any pedagogy depends on the degree to which it recognizes, appreciates, and navigates the cultural context within which it is situated. This is reflected in the definition offered by Alexander (2008):

> Pedagogy is not a mere matter of teaching technique. It is a purposive cultural intervention in individual human development which is deeply saturated with the values and history of the society and community in which it is located. Pedagogy is . . . the act of teaching together with the ideas, values and collective histories which inform, shape, and explain that act. (p. 92)

While access to technology and the internet has the potential to lessen issues of inequity, it can also perpetuate and even accelerate discrimination based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Danielson (2020) states that a commitment to excellence is not complete without a commitment to equity. Inequitable systems and unsupportive learning environments are a product of an unchecked system against equity. Promoting excellence means not only that we focus on most effective practices and encourage ongoing teacher learning and development, but also that we prioritize understanding of how practice does or does not center equity and justice—particularly as COVID-19, systemic racism, and technological resource allocation intersect and pose an ominous threat to communities of color (Danielson, 2020).

Focus on Pedagogy, Not the Medium

Although the forms and forums of teaching interaction are ever-changing, in this case to an online setting, it is essential to focus on pedagogy, not the medium (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Even as the online medium precludes certain forms of in-person contact, it creates opportunities for new ways to interact (Kukulska-Hulme & Pegrum, 2018). Well-planned, intentional uses of online technologies can encourage and facilitate even more "lean forward" behaviors and more interaction with and among students. Even so, according to Kukulska-Hulme and Pegrum, teachers should keep the focus on pedagogy, not the (online) medium. The principles of pedagogy that are effective for online teaching—video, simulation, text, etc.—are similar to those that are effective for in-person instruction. These strategies allow students to engage with material dynamically and across multiple learning styles and apply not only to synchronous teaching, but also to asynchronous content creation (Kukulska-Hulme & Pegrum, 2018).

A Cautionary Tale for Online Settings

Online learning comes with many possibilities, but it also comes with many of the current institutional educational practices that largely come from the established White-cultural-norm, single-story, monolingual (Kukulska-Hulme & Pegrum, 2018) approaches. The research of Kukulska-Hulme and Pegrum (2018) indicates that just as in the context of education in general, students are usually expected to use DAE in online settings, mirroring their in-person experiences, of which thousands have been indoctrinated through the national education system. Kukulska-Hulme and Pegrum argue that this is contradictory to the sociocultural trends and how speakers—often from more than one language—use multiple linguistic resources in their everyday lives as the norm in online settings and that teachers must resist the DAE patterns in today's online settings. According to Kukulska-Hulme and Pegrum's research, it would seem appropriate to balance the teaching of languages and give access to resources and opportunities with the recognition of students' own language practices (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Restricting expression through language limits students' communicative potential and their access to learning and delegitimizes their everyday practices (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Students should have the chance to develop and master the more flexible language skills that they will need in the future (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Culturally sustaining communication provides an opportunity for (and is possible when) learners draw on racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse sign systems/modalities to consume, curate, and create in face-to-face and digital spaces (Morrell, 2012). Morrell explains that teaching practices grounded in a CSP framework create opportunities for learners to inquire about how language and power converge in print or digital texts to dismantle biases against marginalized communities (Morrell, 2012). Learners need opportunities to practice recognizing

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patterns in discourse that are rooted in the oppression of nondominant groups (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, ability) and a variety of strategies they can use to interrupt this discourse. Online learning, when approached with the CSP mindset, can offer additional inlets for challenging deficit-orientated instructional practices that injure the psyche and self-esteem of students of color.

It is important for learners to have many opportunities to engage in multimodal literacy practices as a means to communicate information that supports participating in a diverse and democratic society (Alim & Paris, 2017). Learners are navigating digital spaces during a time when narratives are being constructed for a variety of purposes. Learners need a heightened awareness about how texts and tools can be used to produce and circulate biased narratives aimed at justifying exclusionary practices and policies that disproportionately impact nondominant communities. Learners also need sustained opportunities to produce counter-narratives that expose and interrupt misguided texts that do not represent the fullness of their identities or life complexities. To engage in participatory literacy practices, learners will benefit from opportunities within the curriculum to author multimodal stories in order to examine power, equity, and identities and grow as digitally savvy and civic-minded citizens. CSP in online settings should be s co-constructed by students, families, community, and schools and should affirm racial, cultural, and linguistic identities to foster positive academic outcomes. Teachers should empower students to lead their own learning by contributing to learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of meaningfully relevant conversations, activities, and engagements. The goal of CSP in online settings is that students and teachers become aware of, study, and challenge inequities, as both outgrowths of online education and features of it. Culturally sustaining online education can promote sociopolitical and health agency for students

and their families, and it is an exciting forum for students to claim ownership for their learning and their right to their own language.

Summary of Literature Review

As the progress toward the ideals within the "Students' Right to their Own Language" (1974, 1988, 1992, 2015) is gauged in mainstream classroom practice, it is critical to continue the examination of current teaching and learning practices that are relevant and responsive to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices of students across categories of difference and inequality. This study examined the teacher decision-making process and the extent that first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction.

This literature review has offered an overview of frameworks and practices that have the explicit goal of guarding monocultural and monolingual societal views, such as English-only ideologies, which continue to infiltrate the U.S. education system. The review suggests that the research and practice needed to resist monocultural and monolingual practices is through culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) that embraces cultural pluralism and cultural equality by operating from a CSP stance, whether the teacher is providing in-person or online literacy instruction. Discussion on the significance of the development of a personal language identity and the need to embrace cultural language as equal with academic language is an instructional mindset of CSP and asset-based approaches.

CSP in teacher practice can be examined through the use of Joseph and Evans's (2018) critically conscious framework, which uses a lens for critical inspection of education decision making, policies, and practices embedded in historical, sociocultural, and political contexts. Through the critically conscious teacher preparation framework, Joseph and Evans offer the opportunity for urban mainstream teachers to analyze racist and discriminatory practices,

challenge dominant ideologies, and consider transformative actions within the education systems in which they work. The review further has suggested that the framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) can be used to understand practicing mainstream teachers' knowledge and belief systems when making instruction decisions. The three dimensions of enhanced mainstream expertise as presented by de Jong and Harper (2008) outline an asset-based approach based on the role of language and culture in teaching and learning. They propose the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect an awareness of three dimensions: the process of learning a second language, the role of language and culture as a medium in teaching and learning, and the need to set explicit linguistic, and cultural goals (de Jong & Harper, 2008). With strong ties to Alim and Paris's (2017) CSP and Lucas and Villegas's (2013) linguistically responsive teacher frameworks, the work of Joseph and Evans (2018) makes the critically conscious teacher preparation and de Jong and Harper frameworks a vital resource when analyzing the teacher decision-making process.

The current context of the COVID-19 global pandemic was a factor in the framing of this literature review. The sudden move to full online instruction forced an expedited move to remote online settings for every education institution, and online instruction remains in place over a year later. Literacy instruction in the online setting offers both opportunity and caution in which educators must be aware of and purposefully address now and beyond the pandemic. The main discussion captured within this literature review is a stance for the need to strive within and beyond relevant and responsive ideology toward the valuing and *maintenance* of a multiethnic and multilingual society by suggesting that culturally and linguistically *sustaining* (Paris, 2012) approaches during literacy instruction are pursued and nurtured in today's mainstream urban classrooms.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research design of this study that seeks to examine teacher decision-making and application of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in literacy instruction. The significance of this work is that many urban classrooms are representative of a pluralistic society, and it is imperative that mainstream teachers implement literacy instruction with the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students at the forefront. This chapter begins with the presentation of the research question, followed by a comprehensive summary of the research design. The phenomenological approach to the research methods grounds the details of the setting, participants, data collection and analysis. The chapter closes with an explanation of the limitations of the research and concluding thoughts.

Research Questions

The questions that guided the phenomenological orientations of this qualitative study focused on the experiences of first-grade mainstream teachers. They include: (a) What are the experiences of first-grade mainstream teachers as they identify and plan to implement linguistically sustaining strategies during English literacy instruction in classrooms with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages? (b) Which language strategies do first-grade mainstream teachers implement during English literacy instruction, and what factors influenced the use of these practices (i.e., responding to nonmajoritarian languages and planning for and using language during literacy instruction)? and (c) What actions are mainstream first-grade teachers taking to build inclusive experiences for all languages in online settings? These questions were the anchor for the methodological decisions implemented throughout the study presented here.

Research Design

      A qualitative approach was used in this research to focus on the perspectives of teachers as a way to contribute what is known about educational practice (Merriam, 1988). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define qualitative research methodology as a non-mathematical process of interpretation, employed for the purpose of uncovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing them into a theoretical explanatory schema. The processes of data collection and data analysis are closely aligned, each informing and guiding the other. This qualitative research approach relies on the participants' own understandings of their social environment, the importance of flexibility, and the need for researchers to be creative and customize the approach to their own research settings and interests (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

      To analyze teacher decision making, the research questions shaped this phenomenological study. Phenomenology as a methodological framework seeks reality in individuals' narratives of their lived experiences related to a specific phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The intent of this research fits well with the characteristics of a phenomenological qualitative design—the study takes place in the natural (classroom) setting, the researcher is a key instrument, multiple sources of data were used for triangulation (interview, observation, artifact analysis and debrief), the data analysis occurred through an inductive process, the participant meaning-making was a focus (member check protocols), and an attempt was made to capture a holistic account of the culturally sustaining pedagogical phenomenon at hand.

Phenomenology

      Phenomenology is a method of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world and is a powerful approach for an inquiry emphasizing teacher practice, specifically focused on culture and language in a period of

mandatory online learning (Creswell, 2013). The term *phenomenology* has a Greek orientation

that means "to appear" (Rockmore, 2011). Through a phenomenological lens, a researcher

documents what is sensed, perceived, and arises from an individual's experience (Moustakas,

1994). The phenomenological approach was selected for this study because it provides a way to

explore the phenomenon of what it means to be a culturally and linguistically responsive literacy

teacher. In doing so, the essence of the teachers' lived experiences are documented while the

particularities of the phenomenon are described (Cilesiz, 2009). Building a stronger

understanding of the nature of the phenomenon of the cultural and linguistic affinity of teachers

yields insight into the teacher decision-making process. This is especially significant in a time

when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in mandatory online learning

According to van Manen (1990), the construct of a *lived experience* illuminates the

nuances of each individual experience within a similar event. In this study, the shared event is

the teachers' experiences within a first-grade literacy classroom during online teaching and

learning. Phenomenology fully embraces the lived experiences of the teachers as meaningful and

central to the study of this particular phenomenon at hand (Creswell 2010, Moustakas, 1994).

Application of Frameworks

In addition to the phenomenological lens, this study was framed by theories supporting

teacher knowledge of instructional practices with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages, most

notably CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). The foundational research of CSP (Alim & Paris, 2017)

shapes this study centered on linguistically sustaining responsiveness in literacy instructional

practices among first-grade mainstream urban teachers. The relevant scholarship that highlights

hallmarks of culturally sustaining mindsets with the goal of challenging the longstanding history

of deficit linguistic and cultural views associated with racialized and socioeconomically marginalized populations served as the archetype for a methodological design.

Framed by the Joseph and Evans (2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) frameworks as a lens for CSP-oriented instruction, this phenomenological research design is based on the collection of evidence related to teacher knowledge, skills, and disposition of language equity. In support of CSP, the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) offers rich analysis of orientations, pedagogical knowledge, and skills of linguistically sustaining practices that can assist teachers in their commitment to CSP in the classroom. Joseph & Evans (2018) conclude that a critically conscious teacher preparation framework fosters the significance of knowledge and "realizes the call for action central to critical action-oriented foundations essential to building a solid identity" as a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students (p. 1).

Additionally, the de Jong and Harper framework (2008) allows for examining teachers' decision making through analysis of practices of language sustainability, the level of understanding about the dynamic nature of culture for the students whom these educators serve, and the ability to critically and meaningfully include the practices and beliefs of communities of color into their learning environments. The de Jong and Harper (2008) framework is used to interpret and analyze teacher-developed literacy lesson plans, the online classroom environment, and literacy instruction specific to an online setting. These frameworks are a philosophical match for this study, because they provide methods for identifying and analyzing teacher practice and decision-making in diverse urban classroom settings which have been historically and currently underrepresented in educational research (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Orelus, 2013; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Positionality

As a White woman in an urban district where the racial, linguistic, and cultural experiences of students differs from my own, I must acknowledge that I may not have the same lived experiences of some of the students. Learning about anti-bias and anti-racism does not make a person entirely free of racism or biases, and I must work to maintain awareness of my own explicit and implicit biases in all my interactions, observations, and writing. I must also acknowledge that one of the problematic issues in the urban district featured in this study is the disproportionate number of White, female educators as compared to the number of students of color. This reality can impact interpretation and must be explicitly acknowledged and addressed at all points of the study through the methodology.

Additionally, as a district-level administrator, my current position may have caused some of the participants to feel distrustful or uneasy, and they may have knowingly or unknowingly guarded their level of engagement. By definition, a significant portion of my district duties include designing and supporting curriculum and instruction for K-12 literacy. This may have caused apprehension for teachers as they may consider my observations or inquiries to be evaluative against district curriculum and instruction guidance. It was essential to ensure that the participants understood that they were protected in the research process and that the research was solely for my individual growth as a learner. One of my main goals was to immediately build trust and confidence with the teacher participants to fully protect their involvement and provide a safe place for their contribution to the study. It was understandable for participants to want to feel safe in sharing their ideas and thoughts with me as decisions related to teaching are very personal. Ensuring that I was respectful and took every measure to safeguard their trust was of

the utmost importance during this study and beyond. The methodology includes purposeful protocols to protect the privacy and integrity of the teacher participants of this study.

My primary role while in the classrooms of the teachers of this study was that of participant observer and interviewer (Broad, 2012). My central responsibility within each classroom was to collect the data and talk with the teachers in reflective interviews about their instruction. As a participant observer within the classroom, I co-constructed the inquiry process (Broad, 2012) and the classroom activities with the participating teachers. My own history, biases, and positionality influenced how the interactions occurred between the teachers and me. My position also impacted how classroom interactions with students transpired, how these interactions were captured, and how these interactions were analyzed (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). I recognized that I did not have the same experiences as the teachers, as I have not taught in settings that have speakers of nonmajoritarian languages. Therefore, my experiential lens was different from the students and participating teachers. These factors influence how the data were produced, collected, and interpreted.

Setting and Participants

The setting and participants of this study were purposely selected based on the demographic composition of the students and the researchers' knowledge of the pedagogical experiences of the teachers. In the following sections, the setting and participant details are outlined.

District Context. The schools featured in this study are part of the largest urban public school district in a U.S. Midwestern state. In 2020–2021, the district served 74,966 students in 158 schools, which included 95 elementary and K–8 schools, two early childhood centers, five schools serving Grades 6–12 or K–12, seven middle schools, 15 high schools, 15 non-

instrumentality charter schools, six instrumentality charter schools, seven partnership schools, and six alternative schools. The student demographics were reported as 51.3% African American, 27.2% Hispanic, 10.0% White, 7.6% Asian, 0.5% Native American, 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 3.3% two or more. The district data indicated that, collectively, English learners within the district spoke more than 70 languages. District reports indicated that 89.9% were students of color, 82.6% of students were categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 20.1% of students received special needs services. Schools in this urban district can be grouped as public schools, charter schools, or private schools or by their governing authorities.

Selection of Schools for Teacher Recruitment. The first part of the recruitment process consisted of identifying school sites with diverse language populations and speakers of nonmajoritarian language(s). After school sites were chosen, first-grade teachers were identified and selected according to the teacher recruitment criteria and process. The schools were selected because they offer English as a second language (ESL) programming and, based on school-reported demographics, have more diverse language populations among students as a result of that designation. These schools have reported diverse student populations representative of a pluralistic society, including speakers of nonmajoritarian languages. Important to this study is the knowledge that the teacher population at these ESL sites have a greater number of professional development sessions explicitly focused on linguistic responsiveness and sustaining instructional practices. This professional development difference between schools is the result of state requirements for obtaining and maintaining ESL programming within the district. Teacher and student responsiveness in these ESL-specific settings is a valuable focus of exploration because teachers, students, and families have expectations about teaching and learning experiences for

students who speak nonmajoritarian languages, and possible gaps of knowledge, practice, and pedagogy can be studied (Souto-Manning, 2016). It is critical to pursue understanding about the differences in expectations between and across teacher knowledge and practice, so that there is a stronger common foundation that can be utilized as an operating structure for current and future mainstream teacher professional development (de Jong & Harper, 2008). Since there is a variety of ESL program models, understanding the description of these models is critical to a comprehensive look at the research spaces. The following descriptions of the school settings are offered here. Pseudonyms are used to summarize the ESL programming within the three schools of the study.

Juniper School. This school serves approximately 500 K3–Grade 5 students and is in the southwest part of the city. The student population is 98.6% Hispanic or Latinx, 1.0% White, and 0.4% indicate two or more races. English learners (ELs) make up 67.7%, students with disabilities comprise 17.4%, and economically disadvantaged students are reported at 89.6%. The school programming is designed around content-based ESL. ESL teachers teach science but also give grades in English language development, while the mainstream teacher provides literacy instruction. The district categorizes the schools as bilingual or dual language one-way because the student population includes native Spanish speakers, who have a mix of Spanish and English instruction. The classrooms in this study were focused on English instruction.

The school website describes the school programming and community as close-knit and family-like with all teachers working as a team to see that each individual student succeeds. According to the school's programming, the school is dedicated to partnering with diverse families so that their children develop solid language skills, a love of the arts, appreciation of cultural roots, and the confidence to do well in school. According to the school, most school staff

have advanced degrees, including master's degrees and specialty certifications, allowing students to receive a high level of expertise in the classroom each day.

Sycamore School. This school serves approximately 600 K3–Grade 8 students and is in the central part of the city. The student population is 34.6% Asian, 61.8% Black or African American, 2.0% Hispanic or Latinx, 0.3% White, and 1.3% indicate two or more races. English learners (ELs) make up 30.9%, students with disabilities comprise 19.8%, and economically disadvantaged students are reported at 96.3%. The school programming is designed around the pull-out model. The district's pull-out model describes a program where students are removed from the general education classroom for a set period of time by an ESL teacher who provides English language development instruction to students in an alternate learning environment. The group size is reduced to give intense language support, specifically to students who are performing at a pre-level 1 to level 2.9 English proficiency (WIDA, 2014). The use of data (e.g., conversations with classroom teachers based on observations and assignments, formative/summative assessments, parent feedback) assists the ESL teacher in aligning English language development standards to grade-level academic standards and skills in the content area from the grade-level curriculum. ESL teachers work with the mainstream teachers by providing English language development in the content area from which they are pulling students for services while the mainstream teacher provides literacy instruction.

The school website further describes the misconceptions of ESL as being about assimilation or glorifying native English speakers, and at this school, ESL recognizes the disparities perpetuated within the education system (i.e., standardized testing practices). The educational goal at this school is for students to be supported in building confidence and cultivating knowledge through ESL resources. The school advertises cultural competency within

the school's curriculum for its students. This means that while students have help with the English language, they also have the power to demonstrate their own families' and respective communities' knowledge.

Maple School. This school serves approximately 700 K3–Grade 5 students and is in the southwest part of the city. The student population is 0.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.0% Asian, 17.2% Black or African American, 75.2% Hispanic or Latinx, 5.0% White, and 1.1% two or more races. English learners (ELs) make up 34.8%, students with disabilities comprise 29.9%, and economically disadvantaged students are reported at 98.3%. The school programming design is a combination of pull-out and inclusionary. Inclusionary, or push-in, is when ESL teachers conduct services in the general education classroom. Within the programming at Maple School, the ESL teacher works with small groups of students or individual students, providing English language development instruction that might mirror what the other students are doing. The district categorizes the schools as bilingual or dual language one-way because the student population includes native Spanish speakers. The school website describes the school as a place where students listen, speak, read, and write in English and Spanish. The school advertises that the staff includes certified teachers that use bilingual curriculum and materials to cultivate language and culture in their teaching and learning experiences that include all diverse learners.

Participant Recruitment

Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2010) was used for the recruitment and selection process. Purposeful sampling, teacher recruitment, and obtaining consent are described in the following section.

Purposeful Sampling. Purposeful sampling is beneficial for the phenomenological orientations of this qualitative research because of the specific inquiry focused on culturally and linguistically responsive practices in first-grade literacy instruction. Creswell (2010) explained that a purposeful sampling strategy involves careful selections based on the participants and their understanding of the phenomenon; thus, the researcher can decide whether participants share significant and meaningful experiences concerning the phenomenon under the investigation. To ensure this purposeful intent, criterion-based selection was used as a sampling method (Creswell, 2010).

Teacher Recruitment. The teacher participants were purposefully selected based on the criteria listed in Table 1. I specifically sought teachers from classrooms that represented a student population that was diverse in language needs. The need for classrooms that are representative of students with diverse language needs is paramount to study teacher practice under CSP and for culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction (Alim & Paris, 2017). These conditions are the essence of the phenomenon that was studied. This phenomenon was based within a set of particular contexts and situations shaped by many different factors, from which a generalizable pattern of practices could be drawn out (Cilesiz, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This phenomenological research was context-preserving (Broad, 2012), in that the phenomenon of culturally and linguistically responsive practices of first grade teachers cannot be studied in dissociation to their context. To understand the culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies in this phenomenon, the larger programmatic, ideological, and demographic contexts (Tardy, 2017) and the cultural and rhetorical elements of their contexts (Bratta & Powell, 2016; Powell et al., 2014) must be understood.

Potential teacher candidates that fit the teacher selection criteria were contacted through email and/or video conference. To avoid undue influence during recruitment that may have been caused by my positionality, I solicited the help of two teacher leaders to be the point of contact for the potential participants. I chose the teacher leaders based on the extensive experience that they had across the district with classroom teachers in ESL settings. Due to their practical experience, the teacher leaders were knowledgeable, familiar with the faculty, and their recommendations were trustworthy. From there, the potential teacher participants were sent an email inviting them to participate (Appendix A). This invitation was an introduction to the study and provided details of the participant tasks. The willing participants were provided with an additional email confirming their participation. This email included an attached *Informed Consent* (Appendix B). This consent was provided to establish a solid understanding of the scope of research, build the comfort level for participation, and describe the safeguards that were developed to maintain participant anonymity throughout the entire process. Special care was taken to provide formal assurances to participants that their participation would not be shared for any purpose and would not impact their teacher evaluation or the job performance evaluation process. The *Informed Consent* included a statement indicating that protocols were in place to protect their participation and identity, and time was dedicated in the recruitment phase to explain this to all potential participants. All recruitment solicitations were communicated through their teacher leader support person and was guided by the recruitment *Email Script*s (Appendix A). Successful recruitment was achieved when four signed consent forms were obtained and screening to verify eligibility was completed.

Table 1

Teacher Recruitment Criteria

Criteria	Definition	Rationale
First-grade teacher of record at one of the selected sites that has designated English as a second language (ESL) programming	First-grade teacher of ESL students	First-grade classrooms offer an opportunity to analyze developmental literacy instruction at the foundational levels—a key aspect of the type of research being conducted.
Mainstream teacher	General education teacher responsible for teaching grade-level content	Teachers designated as mainstream are being studied to determine the teacher's ability to apply an equity approach to leveraging language, including English language variance, to develop grade-level literacy skills. The mainstream teacher provides the majority of instruction throughout the course of the school day and understands the knowledge and pedagogical practices that first-grade mainstream teachers utilize to inform their literacy practices when providing instruction in English as a second language (ESL) designated classrooms in the purpose of the study.
Classroom population	At least 25% of students in the classroom qualify to receive ESL support.	Diverse student language needs are necessary to conduct the research. Classrooms with at least 25% of students designated to qualify for ESL support will provide a rich sample.
Teacher experience	Teacher has two or more years of teaching experience.	Due to the complexity of teaching, first-year teachers will not be included in the study. Teachers with two or more years of teaching will alleviate stress factors that first-year teachers experience.
Recommendations	Recommendations by district teacher leaders will be considered. Recommenders will consider the teacher workload, availability, and disposition for participation.	Recommenders will consider the teacher workload, availability, and disposition for participation. Teachers who serve on multiple committees, hold several other secondary job-related titles, or work additional jobs at the school (after care, wraparound, etc.) will not be highly recommended solely because of the additional time constraints. Recommenders will select teachers who show evidence of successful teaching practices.
School administrator approval	Approval of school administration is required for participation.	The school administrator will approve participation to ensure that there are no conflicts or implications related to participation. The school administrator can provide a level of support to validate the participation

Criteria	Definition	Rationale
		in the study by understanding and agreeing to teacher participation. Agreeing to teacher participation reinforces the idea that participation in research on behalf of increasing scholarship in the area of teacher practice related to linguistically and culturally sustaining practices is an important contribution to the larger field of education.
Informed consent provided by participant	Agreement of participation by the participant will be obtained after detailed explanation of all components of the study. The informed consent will serve as the participant agreement.	The full agreement of voluntary participation is necessary to elicit successful participation for the duration of the study

Obtaining Consent. Consent was obtained through the use of the *Informed Consent* form (Appendix B). The *Informed Consent* form was emailed in advance for potential participant review by the teacher leaders that were assisting with participant recruitment. If the potential participant requested to speak directly to me in the recruitment phases, I would meet to provide any additional information or assurances. Potential candidates often wanted to verify all components of participation in advance directly with me, so this added outreach was beneficial to the recruitment process. I met online with the potential participant to further explain or answer outstanding questions that potential participants posed regarding participation. Spending this initial time to provide assurances and develop a relationship as a non-evaluative researcher was an important preliminary trust-building step (Creswell, 2010). All teacher participants were assured that the nature of the research (and the indications of the consent document) was for learning purposes only and would in no way have any effect on their job performances. All protocols related to privacy and processes in place in the study were created for the purpose of

maintaining anonymity and providing safeguards against any job-related ramifications that may affect performance evaluations.

Participant Selection

The phenomenological orientations of this qualitative study (Creswell, 2010) required a minimum of three teachers. Originally, I was able to recruit four teacher participants, but due to the extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, I chose to proceed with only three of the four recruits. The three participants were similar in race, gender, and years of teaching experience. The participants identified as White, female, and had at least three years' teaching experience in a mainstream classroom setting. As described, the participants had similar school and classroom demographics, which ensured that their classroom student population was representative of diverse cultural and linguistic populations. The three teacher participants are described below in more detail.

Amber. Amber (pseudonyms are used for all participants) is a teacher with twelve years teaching experience. During her twelve years of teaching, she has taught first, second, and third grade as a mainstream teacher at two different ESL schools within the district. She has been in her current first grade position for five years. She expressed interest and willingness to participate in this study because she "believes there is so much to learn about how students learn best" and knows she should be "on top of whatever the newest research says so she can teach to her students in the most effective ways possible." Amber has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction and describes herself as a "person who is open to any new learning as long as it makes me a better teacher." Amber said that teaching in the online setting was "not something I feel 100 percent good at, but I realize it has to be done".

Brittany. Brittany has taught first grade at the same school for six years. Prior to teaching in her current assignment, Brittany taught seventh grade Spanish class for three years at a middle school in the same district. She has a minor in Spanish from her undergraduate degree and is currently pursuing a master's degree in reading. Brittany indicated excitement to participate in this study as it related well to her coursework for her reading degree. She felt that her participation could be "used as a reflective part of her portfolio" so participation was beneficial in many ways. Brittany communicated that she was "hopeful about the online learning but also very worried. Students don't seem to be as engaged."

Carolyn. Carolyn has taught for nine years at three different schools within the district. Each of her assignments has been very different settings and this was her first teaching assignment in an ESL setting. She has been in the current first grade assignment for four years. She has an early elementary degree and wants to pursue a master's degree in the near future. She has described herself as "a resourceful person who digs into just about everything." She stated that her classroom has transitioned "well to the online world" and that she looks forward to learning more about how to "do literacy in the best ways" while we are in the "current situation."

Data Collection

Data collection for this study consisted of teacher interviews, teacher observations, and artifact analysis. Table 2 captures an overview of the CSP-related frameworks and the areas of analysis related to each data collection tool. The use of these frameworks provided a mechanism to probe and understand the ways that teachers leveraged language use and integrated language development, cultural/experiential differences of all languages, and processes of cultural adjustment that consider the effect that language instruction has on the importance of identity comparative to literacy outcome. With this understanding, the data collection methods are

presented and include the interview process, observations, artifact analysis and member check

debriefings. (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2010).

Table 2

Application of Frameworks for Data Analysis

Source	Areas of Analysis Related to CSP	Data Collection Tool
de Jong and Harper (2008)	Three dimensions of expertise needed for teaching ELs: • Contextual understanding of bilingual learners' linguistic and cultural background • Knowledge and skills related to the instructional role of language and culture • Navigation of policies and practices to ensure inclusivity	• Teacher interviews (one per teacher) • Scheduled classroom Observations (two per teacher) • Artifact analysis (lesson plans of observed the two observed lessons) • Member check debriefings.
Critically conscious teacher preparation (Joseph & Evans, 2018)	• Establishing critically conscious pedagogy • Disrupting historical regression • Revitalizing the democratic values of public education • Becoming advocates and action-oriented practitioners	• Teacher interviews (one per teacher) • Scheduled classroom Observations (two per teacher) • Artifact analysis (lesson plans of observed the two observed lessons) • Member check debriefings

Teacher Interviews. The teacher interviews provided insight into the culturally and

linguistically sustaining pedagogical frames that teachers were operating within and the level of

critical consciousness evident among the teacher participant group. The interview questions were

designed to solicit teacher perception and belief systems about the level of critical consciousness,

determined by identifying evidence of the four foundations described by Joseph & Evans (2018).

The design of the questions also allowed the teachers to provide evidence of conceptual

understanding (knowledge and skills) and dispositions toward cultural pluralism. The interviews

are what Creswell (2013) would describe as pragmatic, stemming from the research questions as

one of the most likely ways to effectively explore teachers' culturally and linguistically

sustaining pedagogies. The phenomenon that was explored was based within a set of contexts and situations, shaped by many different factors, but from these a generalizable pattern of practices were drawn out. Conducting qualitative interviews was an approach to documenting rich contextual information and to understanding how participants saw their own practices as situated in these contexts. These interview sessions were intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2013).

One 45-minute semi-structured interview was conducted with each teacher to capture the participants' experiences. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit the perspective and thinking of each teacher's understanding of CSP and how it affected their decision-making process. The interview allowed for the teacher participants to share their thinking and rationale specific to instructional choices they make during literacy instruction. According to Leonard (2014), semi-structured interview formats allow for adaptability to the emerging perspective of the participant as *experts in their experience*. For this study, it was important to center the participants as experts in their experience and for them to reveal what they thought was important and meaningful rather than for me to navigate a predetermined script. The questions provided a touchpoint for moving conversations forward in lulls and avenues of further conversation.

The teacher interview protocol was developed, and the process was communicated to participants in advance and as part of the *Informed Consent* (Creswell, 2013). The teacher interview questions in Appendix C were used to individually interview the three participating teachers. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participant by online video conference and were not to exceed 45 minutes of time. Field notes were taken at the time of the interview through the use of a note-taking tool (Appendix C), and the video calls were audio and

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video recorded for dictation and coding purposes only. Participants were reminded of the recording procedure prior to the start of the interview, and the limited purpose of audio recording was restricted to transcribing records only. Teacher participants acknowledged and confirmed the recording of the online video call by accepting the consent notification within the digital platform. Consent for recording was captured in the signed consent form and was a required part of the process to record online video calls. No other individuals have access to the written notes or video recordings at any time or for any purpose.

The interviews were conducted in an online setting due to the mandates for local and state social distancing. The state in which this study was conducted was a high-alert state for many months, and social distancing rules were mandated by the state government. To abide by those regulations, and for the safety of all of those involved, all interviews were conducted in an online setting. Online interviews posed both opportunity and challenge related to data collection. In order to establish a safe online environment, the participants' names were replaced with a generic indicator, which corresponded to their pseudonym. This was an important measure as the online platform displays all participants' names and records attendance at the conclusion of the interview by emailing participant names. Replacing the teacher participant name ensured that there would not be a way to identify the teacher through those routes during or at the conclusion of the interviews. Cameras were not used during the interview recording. In order to mirror previous established interview practices prior to COVID-19 mandatory online settings, the audio from the interview was recorded and no participant or researcher cameras were activated during the recorded teacher interview. To further protect confidentiality, the teacher interview recordings contained audio only and did not display the name or face of teacher participant making identification.

Teacher Observations. Two 90-minute observations were conducted per teacher during synchronous online literacy instruction. The observations focused on literacy and language practices and the online classroom environment and the *Classroom Environment–Language Observation Tool* (Appendix D) was used to collect data related to the online classroom environment. Each observation was approximately 90-minutes in length and scheduled in advance according to the teachers' schedules. Teachers announced the observation at the start of the literacy instruction to ensure that students were not alarmed by the presence of a second adult in the online classroom environment. After the teacher announced me as an observer, I muted my microphone and camera for the duration of the observation as to not cause any distraction or interruption of the class flow. The observation was two-fold, focusing on both teacher instruction and the online classroom environment. In this case, the study district has a district standard that requires teachers to utilize Google Classroom as the digital platform for classroom instruction. The *Classroom Environment–Language Observation Tool* was used during each observation to capture notes on what was observed and my reflections and/or thoughts.

Observations provided me with a firsthand experience with the participant and allowed the documentation of information as it occurred in the natural classroom setting (Creswell, 2013), a quality significant to the phenomenological intent of capturing the lived experiences of the teacher (Moustakas, 1994). The observations were useful in the exploration of topics that may or may not have been captured in another form of data, perhaps due to the inability to articulate or a lack of perception, and further provided an opportunity to triangulate data based on the other forms of interview and artifacts (Creswell, 2013).

Participants selected the dates and times for the observations. They were reminded that pseudonyms and coding were used to protect any identifying factors, that observational data

would not be shared with anyone (including administrators who supervise them), and that the data are strictly for the purposes of this current research. The observations were conducted in an online setting due to the mandates for local and state social distancing and were implemented during the teacher observation procedures. Several measures were taken to conduct observations that protected student privacy, yet still maintained authenticity. Observations were scheduled in advance with the teacher at times which were chosen by the teacher. The teacher provided the classroom link and made students aware in advance that there would be a teacher visitor logging on to observe. Upon logging into the classroom, I turned off my microphone and camera for the full observation. I was able to read and collect the chat correspondences but did not respond or participate in any written chat comments or questions. I was labeled as Teacher Observer for my naming convention in the online setting.

Artifact Analysis. One lesson plan artifact was collected for each of the two scheduled literacy instruction observations and analyzed using the frameworks and coding. Artifacts provide a window into the language and words used by the participants (Creswell, 2013) and allow for analysis that triangulates the foundations and dimensions. Artifact analysis is an integral part of the methodology and serves to discern between what participants plan for *before* literacy instruction and what actually occurs *during* literacy instruction. By analyzing the lesson plan artifacts for the instruction that was also observed, there was a determination of the level of knowledge a teacher has regarding CSP and whether they actively and purposefully plan for culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in advance of instruction. Knowledge of *how* may not, however, translate into knowledge of *doing* (Candy & Edmonds, 2010). It was also important to note whether other factors (time, technology issues, etc.) influenced or created a gap in what was intended compared to what was implemented during literacy instruction. The

Observation Tool (Appendix D) was used to analyze the findings of the lesson artifacts. After lesson artifacts were reviewed and annotated, the annotations were listed in the Observation Tool so they could be coded accordingly.

Member Check Debriefing. The trustworthiness of results is the core of high-quality qualitative research. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results (Armstrong et al., 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Member checking, online in this study, took place following the completion of the interviews and observations. The one-on-one member checking process addressed the co-constructed nature of knowledge by providing participants with the opportunity to engage with, and add to, interview and interpreted data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Protection of Data. Rigor was maintained in all steps of planning, implementing, and analysis of this research study. No part of the study will be discussed with anyone except the participants. Pseudonyms will be used in any future use of the data. All electronic data were stored on a password-protected, encrypted computer. All paper data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. The identifying information was separate from the research data and was linked by a study ID. The link was destroyed after collection, so that there is no future reference or documentation record that makes identifying participants possible. In the written research, all characteristics related to the participant were referenced by the pseudonym only, and all identifying characteristics were removed. For analysis of CSP in teacher planning and practice, the interviews, observations, and artifacts were examined using the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework.

Data Analysis

During the duration of this research, data was analyzed as each phase of the study was completed. An example of this process is when the teacher participant interviews were completed, they were analyzed using the coding mechanisms. After each observation was completed, the analysis occurred directly after and this pattern continued throughout the study as a way to keep data organized and clearly referenced. This model of research allowed for inductive data analysis of this study (Hatch, 2002) to immediately capture the lived experiences of the participants. Inductive analysis is commonplace in qualitative research, and by definition this approach moves from the specific to the general (Hatch, 2002). The goal of an inductive approach is to notice generalizations by engaging in the details and the specifics of the data to uncover patterns or themes that generate inferences about mainstream teacher decision-making and language equity approaches (Creswell, 2013).

Coding. Creswell (2013) describes coding as the process of organizing and segmenting data into categories. The interviews, observations, and artifacts were coded using an inductive process and phenomenological lens. Inductive research involves the search for patterns from the data collected and the development of explanations, or theories, for those patterns through series of hypotheses. Creswell (2013) explains the importance of how there can be no predetermined theories or hypotheses at the beginning of the research and the researcher must be free in terms of altering the direction for the study after the research process had come to an end. The inductive approach that was used in this study is outlined in Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding process. The use of these steps is nuanced in this study through the development of two phases. In the first phase, I employed Tesch's steps 1-3. In the second phase, steps 4-8 are described. Tesch's eight steps (p. 198) are outlined as follows:

1. First read is to get a sense of the big idea or whole, reading transcripts and notes from observations and indicating what comes to mind in an initial theme or response.

2. One item is re-read for further questioning to determine "What is this about?" This read is to get a sense of what main substance is resonating the most upon this closer look. The artifact or piece of data is annotated with these big ideas.

3. A listing of the topics is generated and compiled based on the collection of themes. Topics are then reviewed for common threads or similarities.

4. The topics are then reviewed again to reduce the number of topics into cohesive themes that have defining characteristics.

5. Wording is selected for descriptive codes.

6. A final decision regarding the codes and abbreviations for coding is determined for use across the interviews, observations, and lesson plan artifacts.

7. The data are assembled, and the codes are applied.

8. Existing codes are adjusted as needed.

Phase 1. During the first phase, I created transcripts of each of the interviews from the audio recordings (Step 1). After the transcripts were created, I engaged in the first read. During the first read of the interview transcripts, I made notes in the margins of initial reactions or thoughts. For example, in one interview, I made a note in the margin of a teaching strategy that the teacher mentioned, which had possible connections to an asset-based mindset or approach. During classroom observations, I used the *Classroom Environment–Language Observation Tool* to gather everything that I observed and placed those initial observations in the left-column titled, What Did I See? After each observation was completed, I reviewed the observation notes and added reflections and thoughts in the Reflections and Thoughts column. I conducted a first

read of the lesson artifacts and took notes in the margins. One example of a note that I indicated during the first read of the lesson artifacts was an example of cultural pluralism as a planned approach. In this case I wrote the words cultural pluralism next to an example that the teacher wrote in the lesson plan.

A second read of the interview transcripts, observation findings, and the lesson artifacts was conducted (Step 2). Similar to the first read, I made notes in the margins, but this time in a different color to indicate that they were notes from the second read. During this second read, I noticed that I added more information, particularly for the classroom observations in the Reflections/Thoughts column. The second read prompted me to consider more connections that related to the frameworks. For example, I noticed that the teacher may have included more choice for students as purposeful example of democratic education in action. During the second read, I tended to compare the lesson artifact as a planning tool and the classroom observation. This was helpful to reflect upon what the teacher planned instructionally and notice what actually happened during the classroom instruction in the observation.

After the first and second reads were completed, I generated a list of themes that emerged from all of the notes (Step 3). The list of themes included hundreds of words, which were compiled from all of the data sources. I completed a sorting process which allowed me to group similar themes together by their possible affiliation to CSP through the frameworks. As I grouped these words together by theme, I created an abbreviated code and coloring system so that I could identify these themes visually in the transcripts, observation tool documents, and the lesson artifacts. This was useful for easy reference and review when analyzing the data over time.

This process was an example of an inductive analysis technique of qualitative research that involves reading raw data and making sense of it by deriving categories, themes, and sometimes even a model. The primary goal of the inductive analysis is to allow research findings to emerge from the recurrent and prevailing themes in the data (Thomas, 2006) and was an effective process for this data analysis.

Phase 2. The foundations of the critically conscious teacher framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) were used to align the themes merging the guiding concepts of each foundation and the words chosen to describe the theme. The same process was conducted for the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework where the themes were associated with the knowledge, skills and dispositions of teacher practice. The words that were chosen to represent the indicators, emerged from the data collection and matched the CSP phenomenon. The codes were purposeful in identifying those key teacher practices and how they appeared in planning and providing literacy instruction (Steps 4 & 5). Table 3 provides the codes and their definitions.

Table 3

Codes and Definitions

Code	Definition
Understanding of Cultural Pluralism	Examples of when teachers challenge power relations and inequities of English-oriented systems and operate from a multilingual perspective that strategically and purposefully offer alternatives to mainstream paradigms These types include familiarity with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds, an understanding of language demands that go along with learning tasks, linguistic responsiveness, including sociolinguistic consciousness, value for language and diversity, and cultivating the desire to champion on behalf of students.
Additive, asset-based	Examples of when teachers show value for what students bring to the classroom rather than characterizing a student by what they may need to work on or lack, and their assets are not added as an afterthought.

Democratic values	Examples of deliberative classroom discussion and characterized by student choice, action, and deliberation. Deliberative classrooms promote discussion and generally see difference as a virtue.
Development (Beyond Self)	Examples of teacher practice of social change and become bidirectional spaces where students can move outside into the field to experience the dynamics of today's classroom while reflecting, rehearsing, and shaping their teacher identity. Beyond the classroom, teachers should be educated in the ways that the current education climate allows teachers to draw from the past to find new solutions, which includes the role of the federal and state governments in education. Joseph and Evans (2018) suggest that teachers learn about the micropolitics of education in the study of politics surrounding schools, districts, and communities, including influential figures and current issues in the world of teaching and learning.
Scaffolding Strategies	Examples of de-emphasis on assimilation to DAE. Scaffolding strategies that are taught, practiced, and reinforced during literacy instruction including modeling, bridging, schema building, contextualization, text representation, and metacognition.
Teacher Disposition	Examples of heightened awareness of the role that language and culture play as a conduit in teaching and learning, inclusion of explicit language goals as part of literacy instruction.

Through creating the code key and definitions, codes and abbreviations were assigned

and applied across the interviews, observations, and artifact analysis (Steps 6-8). For analysis of

CSP in teacher planning and practice, the interviews, observations, and artifacts were examined

using the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de

Jong and Harper (2008) framework. The use of these frameworks provided a mechanism to

probe and understand the ways that teachers leverage language use and integrate language

development, cultural/experiential differences of all languages, and processes of cultural

adjustment that consider the effect that language instruction highlights on the importance of

identity comparative to literacy outcome. The sorting and categorization of ideas was completed according to a coding key that is represented in Table 4.

Table 4

Coding Key Related to the Frameworks

Element of CSP	Code Identifier	Indicators for Identification in Evidence	Research Base
Foundation 1	CCT.F1 (blue)	Personal, structural, institutional understanding of cultural pluralism	Critically Conscious Teacher (Joseph & Evans, 2018)
Foundation 2	CCT.F2 (purple)	Additive, asset-based practices related to cultural and linguistic pluralism	
Foundation 3	CCT.F3 (yellow)	Democratic values that consider choice, action, and deliberation of students	
Foundation 4	CCT.F4 (green)	Development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of cultural pluralism	
Understanding (Knowledge and Skills)	dJH.U (orange)	Evidence of CSP strategies that are asset-based (scaffolding strategies)	de Jong and Harper Framework (2008)
Disposition	dJH.D (gray)	Teacher behaviors (actions and words) that provide evidence of knowledge and skills	

Study Credibility

The results of qualitative research are credible if the description or understanding of the phenomenon of interest is from the participants' eyes, as they are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Techniques for enhancing the credibility were embedded at all stages of the research process. Credibility was enhanced by maintaining detailed notes and by using recording devices for transcribing the digital files. Appropriate coding protocols offered trustworthy characterization of the data and

application of the frameworks. Member checks further added to the credibility since the preliminary findings were presented to the participants to verify that the data was representative of the experience. Members were able to provide elaboration or input during the check. It is through these components of research that the credibility of this qualitative research was attained.

Member Checking/Debrief. It was important to respect the time and thoughts given to me by the participants and represent their practices as accurately and as respectfully as possible. Member checking was used as a reciprocal and critical practice (Armstrong et al., 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to validate the analysis, include the participants and their perspectives in the process, and honor their contributions to this study. As part of this process, the participants reviewed their interview data and the final data analysis and conclusions with me. Sharing the research is an important method for assessing the validity of the data and interpretation and is usually known as member checking (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), the value of member-checking is that the discussion about the research "corrects, broadens, and deepens the researchers' understanding of the participants' subjective experience" (p. 9). When the final write-up was shared, participants were invited (but not required) to provide feedback on the accuracy of representations and data interpretations. As much as possible, careful consideration regarding participants' feedback (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was given. Minor adjustments were made, but overall, participants felt comfortable with their presence in these pages and agreed with the findings that appear in this study. Some participants pointed to inconsistencies or offered suggestions on how terminology or word choice might be modified. The feedback helped to more accurately frame culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogical practices with input from the community in

which this study took place. Sharing the findings with the research participants was a way of reporting back and sharing the knowledge with those whom it affects. The debriefing was used as a reciprocal and critical practice (Wilson, 2008) to validate analysis, to include the participants and their perspectives in the process, and to honor their contributions to this study.

Validity and Reliability. Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that teachers are using and the attempts to measure those behaviors (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative study measured the transferable information for analysis of CSP in teacher planning and practice; the interviews, observations, and artifacts were examined using the critically conscious teacher education framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong and Harper (2008) framework.

The preparation of data also served as initial data analysis and part of an iterative approach to data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Field notes that captured primary observations and highlighted particular words or comments related to CSP were collected during the interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. These notes captured pertinent information about the participants and their contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994), recorded key ideas and observations, and were analyzed using the frameworks to find patterns and points of interest (Bratta & Powell, 2016; Powell et al., 2014). Interviews were video and audio recorded for analysis.

Analysis included a summary of the content, interspersed with direct quotes from the participants, and recordings were time stamped to make it easy to locate conversations. The video and audio recording reviews provided a way to engage with the material through the transcription process, but also provided a record of the ideas and language of the participants. The recordings served as an excellent reference point for finding information, and if more detail

was needed, the time stamp allowed me to easily find that part of the conversation in the recording. Referencing St. Pierre and Jackson (2014), "Words spoken in face-to-face interviews do not count as data until they are written, textualized in interview transcripts—until they have lost their presence. In fact, words can never retain presence" (p. 716). Reading the transcripts while listening to the interviews—like the transcription process itself—helped to retain, however imperfectly, the sense of presence of the participants. When reading a particular excerpt or phrase pulled for coding, the larger context in which it was said could be retained.

The debriefing process was designed to further build in validity and reliability through a reciprocal approach. It was important to respect the time and thoughts given to me by these participants and to represent their practices as accurately and respectfully as possible. The debriefing was used as a reciprocal and critical practice (Wilson, 2008) to validate analysis, to include the participants and their perspectives in the process, and to honor their contributions to this study. I shared the interview data and the preliminary data analysis/findings with the participants. The value of the member check is that the discussion about the research broadened and deepened my understanding of the participants' individual experiences. The participants provided feedback on the accuracy of representations and data interpretations. As much as possible, an attempt to accommodate participants' feedback (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was made. Their feedback helped me to more accurately frame culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in urban classrooms and provided trustworthiness and credibility to the reported findings.

Triangulation of Data. The researcher's role during the study is to be involved in intensive experiences with the teacher participants (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation of data has a long history in qualitative research and involves cross-checking multiple data sources of

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information and collection procedures to ensure that the data are valid and free from bias (Creswell, 2013). Creswell recommends that to evaluate the extent to which all evidence converges, triangulating data offers multiple sources of evidence to identify uncertainties, consistencies, and potential biases. The comparison of multiple data sources to validate the findings was purposeful in the design and assisted to derive from participants' experiences. The structured interviews with the same questions for each participant provided the outlet to gain understanding of the lived experience each teacher had related to the phenomenon of CSP as it related to teacher decision-making. The classroom observations, and lesson artifacts further validated and verified the accuracy and representation across the data sources. Member checking was used with the participants as a way to assess the trustworthiness of the data and is described in more detail. These checks happened at the end of the data-gathering period.

Rigor of Developing Participant Trust. Safeguarding the participants trust during this study was paramount. During all phases of this research, the maintenance of the teacher participants' trust was strategic (van Manen, 1990). Teacher leaders were involved during the recruitment phase as a knowledgeable and familiar form of outreach for recommendation and participation of participants. These teacher leaders served as an additional bridge of support and communication for all stakeholders. During recruitment, extra time and information was provided based on the individual teacher participants' needs so that comfort and confidence about the research was achieved, especially as schooling transitioned to new online settings. The teacher leaders provided the details of the study in advance of any other conversation so that teachers could make highly informed decisions about the demands and expectations of participation. Sensitivity to teacher participants' confidentiality was safeguarded through extensive privacy protocols throughout the entire study.

Conclusion

Sound methodology is paramount to ensure valid and reliable data in this study. Interpretations and generalizations that are formed from the data analysis aim to inform a model of decision-making for a broader base of individuals. I recommended interpretations are conducted with caution and proactive care to ensure any replications of this work fully consider the community and conditions of the participants in any subsequent study. In this chapter, the methodological approaches to the qualitative phenomenological research were provided as a rationale for the design. The application of the frameworks was described along with how these frameworks informed the collection and analysis of the data through qualitative teacher interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. This thorough explanation lays the groundwork for the interpretation of the findings and discussions that are presented in Chapters 4 and5.

Chapter 4: Data Findings/Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers included culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction. The questions guiding this research were focused on the experiences of the teachers during English literacy instruction with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages. Specific attention was given to the language practices implemented by the teachers and any actions the teachers took to create inclusive experiences for their students. This work responds to the need for mainstream teachers to understand and implement culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy. Understanding and applying culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) during literacy instruction informs teacher decision-making and impacts teaching and learning experiences (Alim & Paris, 2017).

A phenomenological lens (Cilesiz, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Rockmore, 2011) was used in the design and implementation of this study that sought to capture the lived experiences of the teachers to make meaning of the phenomenon at hand—teacher decision-making in literacy instruction with students of nonmajoritarian languages during mandatory online teaching. The Joseph and Evans (2018) foundations and de Jong and Harper (2008) dimensions were used to guide the data collection, analysis, and establishment of the findings. As a result, three findings were revealed: (a) teacher decision-making was orientated in a variety of self-selected professional growth experiences, (b) teachers leveraged the online setting to enhance a culturally sustaining learning environment, (c) teachers sought validation for decision-making in their work with culturally sustaining practices.

The findings are presented through the groundings of phenomenology and are organized through the means in which the teacher experiences were captured. The interviews, observations, and artifact analysis were used to seek the reality that emerges from the narratives of the teachers

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as they described their decision-making process. The teacher interviews provided insight into the culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogical frames that teachers were operating within and the level of critical consciousness evident among the teacher participant group. The semi-structured interview questions were designed to encourage teachers to describe the experiences that have guided them in their use of culturally and linguistically conscious practices and to describe how their knowledge impacts their instructional decision-making. The classroom observations offered an authentic look at the teachers' daily practice, and the artifacts confirmed the experiences of the teachers as they engaged in the work with their students. Each of the three supporting findings is detailed in this chapter.

Finding 1: Teacher Decision-making was Oriented in a Variety of Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences

In the first finding, I learned that teacher decision-making was oriented in a variety of self-selected professional growth experiences. Teacher responses indicated that formal education, district PD, resources, and support of colleagues significantly impacted decision-making. Culturally sustaining practices were apparent in the teachers' planning and instruction (i.e., student-led discussion, language games, and free talk). Teachers also revealed barriers to their experiences, including schedule challenges, lack of follow up support, preferences for self-paced learning, and feelings of isolation. It was evident that the teachers were incorporating CSP in their instruction and they indicated a growing confidence over time. I documented a variety of different strategies throughout the interview, artifact analysis, and observation sessions. Although each teacher came from a different perspective, it was clear that all three teachers were making decisions to include more CSP in their instruction. As an example of growing confidence among the teachers to engage in CSP. Brittany stated, "Two years ago, I am not sure I would

have been able to answer you. But now I can give some strategies that I actually am doing in my classroom on a regular basis." The origins of CSP teacher development and growth as described by the teachers, are presented in the details of this finding.

Origins of CSP Teacher Development and Growth

Analysis of the observations and interviews indicated that there were several pathways to CSP teacher development and growth. I learned that teachers credited their previous formal education, district professional development (PD), and resources (including grant sponsored PD) as guiding forces. Teachers also revealed that the use of their own identified resources and the support of colleagues was essential in CSP development and growth in their current practices. Critical consciousness (Joseph & Evans, 2018) relies on teacher involvement in the process of learning and growing with knowledge, and these examples highlight what I learned about how these teachers grew in their knowledge of CSP.

Formal Education. I discovered through teacher interview responses that formal education had an impact on current classroom practice. Amber noted that her additional degree in curriculum and instruction provided a knowledge base for CSP orientated strategies that permeated her present-day practice. She shared that there was an underlying focus on CSP in most of her coursework even several years ago. Brittany, who completed her undergraduate degree ten years prior, stated that her minor in teaching Spanish to English-speaking students was the basis for most of her preservice teacher education and this education propelled her to think about how their current first-grade students could benefit from those techniques. Brittany revealed that she often relied on specific strategies that she learned in her undergraduate education and applied them to her current teaching situation. Brittany was mentioned that

although she did not teach in this capacity for many years, she credited this educational experience as the most impactful with her students. She commented,

> I learned more in that after-school setting than the more recent PD sessions that I have been made to go to the last couple of years. I fall back on that stuff all the time because I remember what happened, in terms of how the kids responded to me.

Two of the three teachers mentioned the importance of formal education, suggesting that it is a factor in the decision-making even for many years after the actual formal education period.

District Professional Development. It was evident that the teachers felt district PD influenced their decision-making when considering CSP literacy instruction. Each of the three teachers shared very different accounts of the role of district PD on their practice, but each teacher referenced the PD as instrumental. Teaching for the first time in her nine-year career in an ESL school, Carolyn stated that there were additional PD offerings specific to ESL schools that were valuable. Carolyn suggested that these additional learning opportunities provided both resources and strategies that she found worthwhile for CSP literacy instruction. She felt the PD that accompanied the supplementary English online resources was advantageous, even if she wasn't using the online program with her students. Carolyn mentioned that the district-created "help videos" provided convenient and quick bits of information about effective practice which she used from time to time. Amber confirmed the district support, stating, "The district's recent focus on academic vocabulary has really made me think about ways to incorporate games into literacy instruction." She shared that there were several PD sessions that focused on academic vocabulary that lasted more than one year, which she felt was worthwhile. Amber suggested this sustained and clear focus in this period of time was beneficial for her literacy instruction. She implied that staying with academic vocabulary strategies for more than one session had a

positive impact and made it more likely that she would try something in her classroom. Amber also indicated that the district resources were helpful in making decisions about quality. She mentioned that during a district PD session, she learned how to access rubrics to assess culturally and linguistically relevant resources and bookmarked this resource for future use. Through these PD sessions, Amber was able to make an incremental change that continues to impact the day-to-day decision-making as she selects appropriate text for students.

Brittany shared a unique experience regarding PD related to a grant that her school was awarded. The grant provided over 100 new text sets for each teacher's classroom library. The text sets were authentic and culturally relevant. She described how as a part of this program, she was provided with PD on culturally and linguistically diverse texts. Brittany recalled that the goal of the PD was to show teachers how to identify authentic culturally relevant text and how to use them during literacy instruction. Brittany shared,

> Authentic text is better than neutral text. I never heard the term 'neutral' when talking about text before, so this was totally new. But it was by far a very big piece of why I try to select text that is not generic but authentic. I look at the author more than ever now.

It is apparent that Brittany benefited from the grant funded PD and that it impacted her day-to-day decision-making about authentic text for literacy instruction. Based on the teacher responses, I learned that district PD, including specific grant PD, has impacted teacher decision-making and CSP oriented literacy instruction.

Resources. Teachers indicated that the availability of instructional resources was directly related to CSP approaches that were used during literacy instruction. The teacher responses regarding resources were categorized as district-adopted or teacher-selected resources. I learned

that the teachers relied on available resources to shape their CSP approaches. Both Carolyn and Brittany stated that they use district adopted resources as the first stop. Carolyn added,

> The principal often expects us to show that we are using the district resources, so we all have to be ready to show that at any time. I have found them to be pretty good for most of my resources, but I do still have an account that I use for Teachers Pay Teachers. I use all of it depending on the topic.

Caroline felt a responsibility to use district resource and was comfortable identifying and using other resources when necessary. Brittany continued to explain that in her past teaching experiences, she relied on resources that were specific to Spanish-speaking students and she was aware that those additional resources were available within the district. This past experience equipped Brittany with the knowledge to seek out additional resources within the district that might be applicable to her literacy instruction and the use of CSP approaches. Amber expressed that she felt comfortable doing her own reading and research on current literacy practices. Amber was self-motivated to continually learn about best practice. She articulated that she "read many articles for class. I try a lot of the things that I read about out in my classroom to see if they are successful with my students. There is always more to learn." I learned that Amber relied on district resources as well, but did not hesitate to use other "open resources" that have been "vetted and approved" for use by the district. It was apparent that instructional resources helped to shape decision-making, development, and growth for each of the teachers when planning and providing CSP literacy instruction.

Support of Colleagues. It was evident that the support of colleagues significantly impacted the origins of CSP teacher development and growth among the teachers in this study. The teachers indicated that they had a strong network among their in-school colleagues, and they

relied heavily on one or two colleagues whom they felt were readily available for more immediate responses to questions, ideas, or feedback. I learned that the teachers counted on their school-based colleagues to inform, confirm, or validate their daily decision-making, which in turn determined what and how they plan and incorporate CSP into their literacy instruction. The teachers shared resources and discussed different strategies to broaden their knowledge of CSP strategies and often observed trusted colleagues so that they could see various CSP oriented instruction "in action."

Brittany discussed her concerns about CSP strategies in an online setting, but "talked to other teachers or watched what they did in their classroom from time to time, this was better than doing a book study or reading an article." She also explained how her grade-level team was her "go-to" group. She added, "When in doubt, I check in with my team, and one of them always knows the answer." She also referred to a Google Classroom that she used as a model to influence the look and feel of her own Google Classroom. Her comments about the visuals that the teacher used to "decorate" her online classroom or ways she made the online classroom more welcoming impacted Brittany's own organization and layout of her Google Classroom space. Brittany's response is indicative of how essential colleague networks are for each teacher's ongoing growth and development for CSP literacy instruction and building capacity across the practicing teacher population.

Adding to this sentiment, Carolyn commented that it is "easier for me to work with my grade-level colleagues because they are such a strong team. I can get in contact with them right away, and I don't have to wait for answers for days." The teachers valued the ability to ask specific questions related to their individual practice and get prompt answers which allowed them to move forward with planning and instruction. In addition, the dialogue between the

teachers was important and critical for building their comfort and confidence when incorporating CSP strategies, especially in a shift to a fully online setting. I learned that the teachers trusted colleagues they work closely with and valued their practice, and therefore counted on the shared expertise among their networks.

Based on the responses, it is clear that the teachers depended on teacher networks to develop and grow their culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction. The teachers appeared to be invested in, and committed to, the efforts of CSP literacy instruction and used their networks to leverage the confidence to grow in critical consciousness. Teachers were comfortable sharing resources amongst one another which was highly beneficial as it increased the likelihood that CSP oriented strategies were implemented. CSP strategies that were listed in lesson artifacts, mentioned during the interviews, or visible during the observations, are outlined in the next section.

Teachers Demonstrated Strategies Aligned with CSP

As the teachers described the variety of self-selected professional experiences they had, they revealed their knowledge about researched-based literacy practices. These practices fortify the significance of their professional experience and are included here in support of Finding 1. Each of the teachers demonstrated examples of CSP oriented practices to scaffold instruction such as language games, discussion, free talk, and modeling. Their responses and instructional practices show an understanding of the knowledge needed to build conceptual understanding of topics concerning language for learning, especially the linguistically responsive teacher framework (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Evidence of language games, discussion, free talk, and modeling was captured during this study.

Language Games. Instances of the ways teachers embedded new language in sensory experiences through the use of realia, manipulatives, graphic representations, and verbal analogies to explain text and activate the five senses throughout the teaching and learning process (Vásquez et al., 2013) were visible during observations and described by teachers in the interview. Carolyn described an example of the language games that are a part of her regular practice:

> We play Kahoots, the 'fly swatter' game, where students slap the correct word on the board that matches a definition that I read. We also play 'headbands' with new words. The students either act out or give clues for vocabulary words. Virtually, we have been playing Pictionary, where students take turns drawing out a word on an online whiteboard and we all try to guess which word it is. I also find pictures off the internet for each vocabulary word, and they try to guess which word belongs to each picture. I've found that using games can always motivate students to learn just about anything. I have adapted these all pretty well to the online setting, so I continue these familiar lessons during the remote learning.

The types of language games that Carolyn has included in her instruction indicated that she attempts to activate a sensory experience for every student. The use of fly swatters on the touchscreens provides students with an active tactile experience, which gives them immediate feedback on their progress. The opportunity to act out words that are displayed on vocabulary cards taps into a variety of outlets that students might activate to show understanding. During one observation of this activity, a student attempted to act out a word associated with a story they were reading called *The Three Little Javelinas* (Lowell & Harris, 1992). The word cactus was the word the student began to act out. As fellow students began to call out possible answers that they

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felt associated with his actions, it was powerful to see the student's knowledge and their ability to make connections between their existing knowledge and what may have been new knowledge for some of the students. Carolyn explained that during the online learning restrictions, a new "scavenger hunt" type of game was popular in which students locate objects around the house to represent or explain word meaning to other students. Carolyn later commented on this experience noting that this kind of activity gives her "a window" into every student's background knowledge and/or experiences, which she stated is very valuable information to have for future lessons.

To contextualize new language in sensory experiences, the teachers embedded the use of realia, manipulatives, graphic representations, and verbal analogies to explain text and activate the five senses throughout the teaching and learning process (Vásquez et al., 2013). During an observation in Amber's classroom, I noticed that when new vocabulary words were introduced to the students in preparation for reading, Amber planned to have either an image from the internet or an actual concrete item available to show students. She would display or project the image, or the item itself, and spend significant time asking students what they know, notice, or wonder about each of the items. In some cases, when students offered that they also had an item at their house to represent the vocabulary word being studied, she encouraged them to bring the object into the online classroom to show others. She allowed the students to talk about how the object looks, feels, smells, or tastes (if applicable). Amber's deliberate choice to allow for this time where students are teaching each other and using language to describe sensory words to assist in making meaning of words, demonstrated an activity that was academically beneficial and highly enjoyable for the students. Amber explained that over time, she was planning to slowly change this activity to make it even more student-driven by providing the vocabulary list and then

allowing students to take turns signing up to find representation of the word (in an item or a visual) and to present it to the class for discussion. Amber's planning and instruction was purposeful and empowered her students by giving them voice and choice in the way they build their knowledge and understanding. Incorporating these regular practices into the teaching and learning allows Amber to become more familiar with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds. Amber is building an understanding of cultural pluralism and she is making attempts to foster this within her classroom. She is developing an understanding of language demands that go along with learning tasks, linguistic responsiveness (i.e., sociolinguistic consciousness) and she is a champion on behalf of students.

Brittany shared examples of language games as well and referenced that these types of approaches have been endorsed as effective practices by the district, so she felt it was necessary to include them in her regular instruction. She mentioned different online district resources that she used as a "bank of ideas" when making instructional decisions about vocabulary. Brittany stated that the district's bilingual multicultural education site had a listing of clickable vocabulary games that could be used with any text and the resources were in multiple languages, not just English and Spanish. Brittany indicated that Learning A-Z (Learning A-Z.com, 2021), which was a paid subscription the district offered for all K-6 grade teachers, had a variety language games for every grade level and also had resources in multiple languages. When I asked Brittany for an example of some of the games that she has used from these different resources, she said a few of her favorites were a "Mad Lib" type game where students play with word meaning in context, a rhyming game where students can create definitions of their own for words, and an analogy game, which really caused students to critically think and develop multiple skills simultaneously.

I learned that the use of these language games was a way for the teachers to show value for what students bring to the classroom. These types of asset-based literacy practices encourage many different routes to learning and language proficiency and were evident in the teachers' decision-making when planning for CSP in literacy instruction.

Student Led Discussions. I discovered that student led discussions seemed to be a highly used scaffolding strategy among the teachers. Evidence in their lesson planning artifacts, interview responses, and classroom observations showed student led discussions were purposeful in the teachers' choices to provide for student voice. Brittany described how she always has at least one opportunity for student led discussion during her daily literacy instruction. When I asked her to describe this in her classroom practice, she said that sometimes she poses a "big question" at the start of the lesson and has students discuss the ideas amongst each other either in small or whole group. She said this approach helps to launch the lesson and activate background knowledge. During reading, Brittany has several different discussion strategies that she uses to assist students with building a deeper understanding of the text. Reviewing her lesson artifacts, it is noticeable that she has student discussion strategically included as part of each lesson. Brittany added that discussions at the end of a lesson can be used as a way of "formative assessment." She stated that she listens closely to student discussion and sharing to determine how they articulate their understanding related to the overall goals of the lesson. For Brittany, the student led discussion strategy was worthwhile in providing information about student progress. Her lessons were filled with these types of conversations that engaged the students, created connections, and provided insight into student thinking and understanding.

Carolyn explained that student led conversations were very important because it allowed every student to actively participate in peer-to-peer discussions. She noted that these types of

interactions between students build confidence and social skills, which are extremely crucial for first grade students. Carolyn commented that the student led discussions, improve their speaking and listening skills, which is essential for learning in any subject area. Carolyn added, "If you can get students talking, you can get them writing." Carolyn had very strong feelings about the effectiveness of this strategy and during the classroom observations these strategies were evident as an integral part of the lesson. Carolyn modified several of her previous student led conversations to adapt to the online remote setting. One of these was observed during her literacy instruction when she created student "expert panels." These expert panels were impromptu and voluntary, although every student was required to serve a role at least one time per semester. During these panels, five "expert" students would volunteer to discuss and answer questions from other students regarding the text they were reading. As this was an established practice, students were prepared with questions to ask their peers that were related to the story. The students followed protocols for "sharing the air" and allowing equal discussion time across all participants. Carolyn seemed very confident in her use of student led discussions and developed strong classroom protocols for ensuring students have successful experiences.

Amber's approach to student led discussion had many similarities to the other teachers, and she had some unique approaches in which she leveraged the online settings in ways that were different than the other two teachers. I observed Amber using two strategies in the chat, which then became the basis for classroom discussion. In one lesson, she had the students "waterfall" their responses in the chat. A waterfall approach occurred as all students typed a response to a question, and they all responded in the chat at the same time, at Amber's cue. This created a waterfall effect of words, phrases and responses. These ideas then became the foundation of discussion among smaller groups of students who then reported back at the end of

the lesson. A second similar technique Amber used, which I had not observed in the other classrooms, was the use of the Answer Garden. I observed Amber posting a question in which all students had to respond in the Answer Garden. The Answer Garden generated a "Wordle" which prompted the students to select ideas and concepts for further discussion. The strategies that Amber planned and executed during literacy instruction to connect to students cultural and linguistic experiences to the concepts conveyed in the text were intentional and informed her decision-making.

In the examples described, these teachers have shown knowledge and understanding about how to leverage student voice through discussion to enhance student learning. The purposeful use of these strategies indicated that teachers value talk and discussion in the classroom, and they realize it is essential for building knowledge. Additional examples of the decisions teachers make to leverage student choice and voice within the online environment are presented in Finding 2.

Student Free Talk. Student free talk was a strategy theme that emerged after two teachers commented on the intentional and strategic incorporation of what can be described as free talk. I learned that examples of free talk included encouraging students to have open-ended discussions about topics or to allow for the self-selection of student topics without the teacher monitoring or correcting the path of discussion. Brittany indicated that the essential part of free talk in her classroom is to "allow students to speak with one another without having rules for everything they say." Brittany created a platform for student discussion among peers to validate the students' meaning-making, encouraging their own word choice to explain thinking (oracy). Her description of the vocabulary game offered an example of a learning experience that was scaffolded by design because it offered many entry points for students to engage and show

understanding. I learned that Brittany thought this was important because she felt many times students become frustrated with too many restrictions on talking about their thinking and therefore sharing ideas becomes "just something that they think the teacher is looking for and not what they are really thinking." During literacy instruction, my observations confirmed Brittany's approach. I did not observe Brittany correcting student language when there were instances of disagreement in verb and nouns, and there were no examples of correcting students who may have used improper plural forms during student conversation. When I asked Brittany about my observations, she explained student conversation does not always have to be formal. She added that it was important to her that students need to feel safe when they talk. Brittany described this thinking,

If I were to correct them all the time, I think it would be detrimental and chip away at the confidence of my students. There are times that showing a student the formal language is needed, but not all the time, and not when they are having dialogue about their thinking.

It was evident that Carolyn had a similar sentiment about free talk in her classroom. She commented, "Language shows the way we think, and it is deeply personal." This indication by Carolyn demonstrates her deep commitment and understanding to embracing language through discussion and talk, as a way to show thinking and learning. She further explained,

You have to let them talk about their ideas sometimes without worrying so much about correcting all of their word choice. If they are excited about something, that is the important part. The minute I stop them and ask them to go back and repeat or restate something, it kills the joy and motivation. It can also embarrass them in front of others, as if I am saying that what they said was wrong. I try to pay attention to that.

Amber and Carolyn responded that they monitor language in the classroom through student-led discussions in which they encourage students to talk freely and focus more about the content of the topic instead of the mechanics of what is being said. During the observations, field notes were taken on how the teachers value talk and conversation in the classroom. The students appeared to have deliberate opportunities to read, discuss or share with partners, small groups, and the larger group in non-threatening formats. This approach supports effective CSP in literacy instruction in which all students can have meaningful discussions, rather than practices that emphasize assimilation to dominant American English mechanics (Baker-Bell, 2020).

The indication that teachers recognize the need to scaffold language instruction to guide students through the literacy instruction is a paradigm shift noted in Foundation 1 of the Joseph and Evans framework (2018). My observations exemplify the teachers' knowledge of proven effective strategies and that the teachers are making decisions to incorporate culturally and linguistically sustaining practices into their literacy instruction. The teachers have a keen awareness of the role that language and culture play in literacy teaching and learning. They are implementing instruction that shows awareness of strategies demonstrated to be effective in leveraging students' linguistic and cultural resources, which is the basis of the second dimension of the de Jong and Harper framework (2008). Furthermore, teachers have taken measures to effectively leverage the online space to modify these effective scaffolding strategies. I have found substantial evidence that teachers have made significant gains to incorporate CSP oriented practices in their literacy instruction.

Barriers to Experiences

Although the teachers had a variety of professional experiences that guided their decision-making, there were also notable challenges and barriers that existed. These barriers

presented themselves across four different themes which included scheduling, lack of follow up, preference of self-paced, and feelings of isolation.

Challenges to Schedules. Based on reoccurring comments during teacher interview and member check responses, scheduling was a significant concern among the teachers. The concerns stretched across daily schedules related to the online remote schedules, which teachers indicated were continually changing. Schedules also were mentioned by the teachers in relationship to origins of their knowledge and growth through PD offerings.

Brittany provided an example by describing that "the PD is usually at times when I can't go, so I don't get to do a whole lot of it. I would like to go more, but it usually doesn't work for my schedule, so I miss it." Brittany added that she was able to go to some PD, but she missed potentially beneficial PD sessions because of the time it was offered. Brittany values PD offerings, and stated she would attend more if they were conducive to her schedule. For Brittany, at the time of this study, the PD schedules were a barrier to her ongoing knowledge and development, and her desire to attend more was apparent.

Amber stated that she preferred district PD that was focused on a few topics rather than a large offering that changed "month by month and year by year." She mentioned that previous PD that had a sustained focus on academic vocabulary was useful for her because she was able to have a "deeper understanding" of a topic which makes "me more likely to try it in my classroom." When asked if those types of offerings were available for this year, Amber commented,

> Most of the PD for this year was about online learning. I get that focus because obviously it was a huge change for many teachers. For me, I felt I did not need the entire focus to be on online learning, some is good, but there could have been some other offerings as well.

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I did not notice anything on the schedule for academic vocabulary this year so I guess

that may passed by and the next thing is underway.

These comments by Amber show that she would have preferred more options in the PD schedule

offerings because there was a limited focus on the PD schedule. According to Amber, the focus

on online learning was not all that was needed, and differentiation based on staff needs would

have been beneficial for her.

Carolyn shared that she felt the PD schedule was "kind of scattered. Sometimes I can go

to a session, and other times I don't go. But they aren't really connected, so I can get little bits of

this and then something totally different, which is nice, I guess." This statement from Carolyn

seems to be both a benefit and a barrier. The scattered offerings that seem disconnected do not

appear to be preferred by Carolyn, but she also mentions that having variety can be useful or

"nice." Carolyn added that she doesn't see the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* in the PD

offerings, but instead notices that the PD focuses on "equity" She stated there is a close

relationship between CSP and equity. Carolyn also noted that even if a PD is not specifically

called an "equity PD, it has connections to equity through the session and those are often even

listed right in the presentation." It was clear throughout my interactions with the teachers that

challenges in the PD schedules impacted their engagement.

Lack of Follow-Up. Lack of support after the learning was cited by each of the teachers

as something that is a barrier to consistent growth and development. In one example, Amber

commented,

 [The PD is] inspirational, but a few days later the excitement wears off and I find that I

slide back into my old way of doing things. I know this is going to happen almost every

time, but I do not know how to change it or stop it from happening. I have tried asking a

colleague to come with me just so that we can hold each other accountable, but that

doesn't work all the time either!

Amber indicated that she struggles to sustain long term change and does not have new ideas for

long term implementation.

Brittany stated that the switch to online remote learning made "follow up even more

challenging. The physical distance between colleagues is difficult, especially having access to

our school support teacher." Brittany further revealed that the school support teacher (SST) has

been very helpful and that an expectation that the SST could be available to all teachers all the

time would be unrealistic. With this in mind, Brittany added that she generally asks the SST

questions, but does not participate in coaching sessions. Brittany's statements suggest she has

relied on the SST in the past for support and follow up, but that the current online remote

situation has made scheduling and coaching more of a challenge. She also concluded that being

physically apart (due to COVID-19 closures) has made in-person or face to face follow up (that

may have occurred in the past) much more infrequent.

Carolyn described lack of support by suggesting that she needed to seek out several of

her own models, or fellow colleagues, so that she could see things for herself "in action."

Carolyn identified that she needed the most support in navigating the numerous online platforms,

many which were new since the school closures and move to online learning. Carolyn explained,

Most of the PD lately has been centered on how to use all of the different online tools that

we have to use now. But after I attend something, I always have to practice and ask

others several times before I truly understand how to do it.

Although Carolyn seems to recognize this need for her own learning and has established her own mechanisms for follow up, she expressed some frustration in having to watch others several times in order to be able to perform certain tasks effectively.

Lack of Self-Paced Learning Options. Another barrier to CSP professional development and growth that arose from teacher interviews was a preference for self-paced learning options. Based on responses, the theme of self-paced learning was revealed. Amber and Carolyn stated that they both had a preference to what they referred to as "self-paced learning modules." They described these modules as courses that were available in the district learning management system. Amber shared that she has not felt entirely comfortable with the online teaching platforms but understood that it was necessary. She added,

> If I could sign up for more online courses, that I could do at any time my schedule allowed, I know that I would take more PD. Having the chance to select what you need and pick from different times and days is extremely important. I also think that I can learn more about online courses by taking them. I like learning by doing.

Carolyn's comments provided another benefit for taking online courses but she expressed the lack of online selections discouraging. She stated,

> Self-paced, on-demand PD instead of live PD gives the opportunity to go back and review the content as many times as needed. The content could also be broken apart into smaller chunks if certain topics were more useful than others based on what I need. I am not sure why our district doesn't have a library of courses with CSP options.

It is evident from these comments that an option that could offer more development and growth for teachers is self-paced, online learning courses. I learned that teachers expressed a

desire for these types of PD and felt that they would benefit greatly if they were developed and made available for teachers.

Finding 1 provided evidence of teacher decision-making that was orientated in a variety of self-selected professional growth experiences that included ways that explained the origins of CSP teacher development and growth. It is important, here, to acknowledge the isolation that was expressed by the teachers as an additional overarching barrier. Although Brittany had shared that her grade level team was instrumental to her growth and development and that she relied upon their guidance and Google Classroom models, she also explained, "I sometimes feels like an island. I think the pandemic has made it so much worse too." The acknowledgement of the feelings of isolation aligned to what can be expected during a time of quarantining and social distancing. Yet, as described in Finding 1, despite these unprecedented times, the teachers clearly articulated the variety of self-selected professional growth experiences, and they effectively demonstrated CSP aligned strategies in their literacy instruction.

Finding 2: Teachers Leveraged the Online Setting to Enhance a Culturally Sustaining Learning Environment

The second finding demonstrates that the online instructional platform enhanced the teachers' commitment to culturally sustaining pedagogy. The online setting provided opportunities for teaching and learning approaches that were not fully considered or utilized in pre-pandemic times. Teacher participants discovered and used explicit connections to cultivate culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that may have not been possible in an in-person setting. As the teachers transitioned to the online setting, their pedagogical literacy practices shifted from the conventional in-person approaches towards online pedagogical literacy techniques. I observed that even within the constructs of the online platform, the teachers

interrupted the default mindset of online teaching and learning, and they developed an online environment with cultural and linguistically sustaining practices at the heart. Online language supports and the use of interactive features which support language were identified as major themes in this finding and outlined in the following sections.

Online Language Supports

There was evidence that the teachers challenged their attitudes about language practices used with students, and this is apparent in the opportunities that they seized in the online settings. An analysis of the data showed that the teachers leveraged the online space to ensure that the classroom environment and instruction were inclusive, engaging, and validated all students. It was evident that teachers recognized the importance of including linguistic and cultural diversity as explicit goals of curriculum and instruction. The teachers identified language demands in literacy instruction and organized their online classrooms to support the development by integrating their language and content objectives into daily practice. Cross-cultural practices and experiences that informed their literacy instruction included student engagement, relationship building and student validation, intentional planning, organization of online spaces, and differentiation of instruction.

Student Engagement. Student engagement was integral to the practices that supported language. Language games, student-led discussions, and student free talk were strategies that indicated teacher understanding of expectations and opportunities for learning. Teachers navigated through daily decision-making with an awareness to avoid assumptions and encourage sustaining behaviors. Brittany shared a lesson artifact that highlighted the level and importance of student engagement strategies at every phase of her literacy instruction. Figure 6 was provided by Brittany, and she described it as "her frame for daily reading instruction." I learned that

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Brittany relied on this organizational template to guide her daily decision-making. Evident in this resource is the priority of student engagement. Brittany explained the in-person instructional design, "It's called whole, small, whole, and that same reference is in this template which made the procedural transition for me and the kids a little easier." The synchronous and asynchronous options are listed for each of the components to make inclusion of these options easier to implement. Brittany noted that she is getting more comfortable using tools like Pear Deck (Microsoft, 2020) and Jamboard (Google, 2020) and she noted that students appeared "excited to join activities using them." She stated, "Once I was used to one, I would try another one with the class." Brittany shared that she felt the creation of these spaces encouraged authentic student engagement and the ability to respond to a range of student attitudes, motivations, and behaviors through CSP-oriented literacy instruction.

Figure 6

Student Engagement as a Priority

Virtual Instructional Design for Reading

Adjusted Times	Virtual Instructional Practices	Synchronous Engagement	Asynchronous Engagement
WHOLE GROUP mini-lesson (10-15 mins)	• Introduce LI/SC (tie to standards) • Mini-lesson (explicit strategy instruction)* • Activate prior knowledge/build background* • Introduce vocabulary • Model the skill/strategy	Use **Google Meet** to conduct short mini-lessons. Use features such as the chat box to pose questions/formatively assess. Use **Pear Deck** (with Google Slides) to create interaction and engagement and/or to formatively assess. You can also use resources such as BrainPop or Flocabulary to introduce concepts or strategies.	**Use Flipgrid** to conduct a mini-lesson or record a mini-lesson in Google Meet (to be posted in your Google Classroom). Have students complete a lesson related to the focus skill or concept. This can be a teacher created activity or an activity in a platform such as BrainPop, Flocabulary, etc.
SMALL GROUP Differentiate Or Scaffold (15-20 mins)	• Small group reading instruction • Guided skill/strategy practice • Guided reading practice	Meet with four to six students at a time via **Google Meet** to provide differentiated and/or scaffolded reading instruction. Use separate **Google Meet** links to create small breakout rooms for collaborative group work *with* students not in the teacher-led small group. Click here to see an example.	Encourage students to use OverDrive for independent reading. Younger students could listen to a picture book on Storyline Online or DaybyDayNY. Encourage students to use **Flipgrid** to create book reviews, summarize what they've read, or share three to five new things that they have learned.
WHOLE GROUP revisit (5-10) mins if live)	• Review LI and SC • Share/Discuss • Determine next steps	Host a live sharing session through **Google Meet**. After reviewing the focus of the lesson, conduct large group discussions and/or a share out of the work that was done in the small collaborative groups.	Check for understanding by using a platform such as **Flipgrid, Google Forms, Pear Deck or Jamboard** to create an exit ticket. Examples: Google Form Exit Ticket, Pear Deck,, Jamboard

students brought to the classroom through relationship building and validation of student voice. I noticed Carolyn exemplified this practice through the use of what she described as a regular check-in with students. She explained that she used the check-ins to "understand how [the students] are doing and feeling, and it is an attempt to have them reflect on their own progress and reach out if they need [her] for anything."

Figure 7 represents how Carolyn has created an online form that students can complete to indicate how they are feeling and to respond to questions related to assistance that might be needed. The first part of the form asks the question, "How are you feeling today?" The students are able to select from a range of corresponding emoji's. The next part of the form has three questions (a) Were you able to find all of your work for today? (b) Do you need help getting started with any of your assignments? And (c) What questions do you have about your assignments?

Figure 7

Teachers Seeking Understanding of Students through Expression of Student Voice

Carolyn's practice exemplifies a critically conscious (Joseph & Evans, 2018) disposition by engaging with students in a daily check-in routine that prioritized building relationships with students and encouraged inclusivity through expression of student choice and voice. This evidence also suggests that Carolyn understands that the practice of checking-in with students on a regular basis has an impact that goes beyond academic outcomes and is essential for the critically conscious teacher (Joseph & Evans, 2018).

In addition, Carolyn described how she felt compelled to create this form in an attempt to learn more about how her students were transitioning to the online classroom. She would review the responses each day to determine how to make updates to the way that she organized or presented information in the online platform. She recalled one student response that resulted in her changing the order of her posted lessons, so that less scrolling was needed to find the most current lesson task. Based on the student response, she changed the order of posted assignments to make the most recent date appear at the top of the page. Making this change eliminated the need for students to scroll down several pages and made the current lesson visible as the first option, reducing the possibility of a student not seeing the lesson among prior postings. Carolyn understood that having to search for the new post each day could add unnecessary confusion for some language learners. Her goal was to simplify the classroom website and make using the classroom website as user-friendly as possible. She explained,

> [Searching the website] seemed to frustrate them and they seemed overwhelmed by all of the text on the webpage. I felt that keeping the newest one on the top and archiving some of the older posts helped to declutter the space and make locating information easier. Organization of the online space was key, and I wanted some of that routine that we have

in the in-person classroom to move in the online classroom website. This helps establish

that predictability which some students rely upon.

Carolyn wanted to be mindful of the student experience, so she often switched to the

student view feature in Google Classroom to be able to get the perspective of the student in terms

of how the classroom was organized. I learned that Carolyn was very concerned about the

transition to the online classroom and wanted to make sure that her students were able to

navigate the space efficiently, and also that they felt welcomed and supported in their new online

learning space. Carolyn's desire to create a space where student identity is not threatened shows

she is making strides to communicate multilingual values in her classroom (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Brittany described practices that were intended to build relationships with her and

between classmates. She explained,

> [Building relationships] was really on my mind because it was the start of a new year and
>
> never before has this happened where none of us met face to face but we were in the
>
> online classroom. We had to get to know one another without any face-to -face meetings.
>
> It was a huge change and I think I may have been more uncomfortable with it even more
>
> than some of the students. It was such a change.

Brittany explained that one of her major shifts in the online setting was to switch from "doing all

the talking" to letting "students take the lead." She referenced how she incorporated the student

led discussions as routine part of every lesson. Brittany shared that her goal was to "dig into the

ways of thinking" that her students brought to the discussion and allow students' ideas to shape

the goals of the lesson. She referenced a discussion wheel that she would spin to encourage equal

sharing time among the students. This discussion wheel replaced a wooden stick strategy that she

used in the past where she selected names and offered selected students a chance to add to class

discussion if they chose. Brittany expanded on the choice by offering students a pass one time a month—with no explanation required from the student.

Although it was not a focus of this study, it is worthwhile to note that teachers expressed that the move to the online setting improved communication with some families. I learned that the online setting may have made it more convenient for some family members to connect with the classroom teacher. The ease of linking in through Google Meet on any given day may have increased the number of interactions that families had with teachers. The online setting and its impact of the ability to build relationships with students' families is an area for future study and it would be valuable to explore this perspective.

Intentional Planning: Evidence from Lesson Plan Artifacts. Through analysis of the teacher lesson plan artifacts, it was evident that intentional planning for students to actively engage in the process of negotiating meaning through academic language was an integral part of their curriculum planning. The teacher examples provided in Figure 8 and Figure 9 show the intentional planning of scaffolded opportunities for language and background knowledge development to ensure that students are able to fully participate in reading-based discussions and to develop their oral and literacy skills in English.

Figure 8 shows how Brittany planned several opportunities to scaffold instruction for students during online literacy instruction. Brittany's purposeful planning includes strategic cultural and linguistic approaches throughout the various portions of the lesson, which include reading comprehension, writing, word study, and formative assessment. In Brittany's lesson plan, she was purposefully inclusive when planning for cultural pluralism. Under the reading comprehension heading, the use of Mis cinco sentidos [My Five Senses] (Aliki, 2009) allowed for positive inclusivity of cultural content and images. Brittany shared that this book is not part

of their adopted reading series, but rather a resource that was recommended by the district's bilingual and multicultural education department. The list of alternative books for literacy instruction was used intentionally by Brittany in her decision-making to offer more diverse language offerings in the English setting. She incorporated multiple discussion points (Joseph & Evans, 2018) for student engagement that centered on student thinking and voice in order to develop reading comprehension. Brittany further described that she selected this book because it was part of a unit on the five senses, and she built a text set of multiple titles to "deepen and build background knowledge on the topic." Brittany plans for multiple discussion points throughout the lesson to serve as part of formative assessment. To formatively assess the reading comprehension, she lists a think-talk-share activity which is particularly beneficial for language learners. During a think-talk-share, students are given think time to reflect on a question silently, which provides more time to process the question, the language, or think of the language needed to convey the answer. Through this activity, the students learning English have the opportunity to put together language and content concepts. By discussing their answer with a partner the student has an opportunity to offer his/her idea in a relatively comfortable setting or to get more information from his/her partner. This can reinforce the student's confidence in his/her thinking and provide modeling for how to say the idea correctly in English.

Brittany's purposeful inclusion of sentence stems, both in English and Spanish, offer scaffolding opportunities for students who may benefit. Brittany stated that she pairs this writing activity carefully with the think-talk-share reading comprehension approach to ensure that "students are confident in their ideas and don't feel stumped about what to write about." A unique outcome of the pandemic was revealed by Brittany as she described the writing in more detail. She added that she has encouraged students to use speech-to-text or recording features to

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assist with their writing. As a starting point, she has suggested to students that they record their voices using the stems and submit them in the Google Classroom as an acceptable pre-writing portion of the assignment. For some students, she has prompted them to use the speech-to-text feature on their Chromebooks, which assists them in seeing how their "ideas turn into words, and their words turn into writing." Brittany explained,

> Speech-to -text helps some students see spoken English in print form. I have found that it
>
> also relieves some anxiety about writing, struggles with writing anxiety, and
>
> using speech-to-text technology can be a fantastic way to help ease him/her into writing.

Brittany's plans included a focus on word study for every lesson. Brittany added that dedicating time each day for word study was a "big sacrifice in terms of time, but it is something that has to be done." I learned from Brittany that she prioritized the study of language through her word study lessons and this practice was a highly valued part of literacy instruction.

Figure 8

Explicit Goals in Lesson Plan Artifacts-Sample 1

Reading comprehension:	Formative assessment
• The teacher will introduce the book "Mis Cinco Sentidos" by Aliki and will do a quick picture walk. • Teacher will read aloud the book and will strategically stop in some parts to think aloud and ask students to think-talk-share a couple of times. • After the reading, the teacher will ask the students to recall the most important information they acquire from the book, and using the students' input the teacher will write the main idea about the five senses.	- Teacher observations during think-talk-share activity. - Students' input recalling facts and understanding main idea.
Writing:	**Formative assessment**
• Students will write a sentence stating the name of the organ, the sense, and a brief description of what one can do with that sense. • Students will be able to use sentence stems introduced at the beginning of the lesson (Uso mi _____ para _____).	- Checklist to assess completion of requirements for writing assignment.
Word study:	**Formative assessment**
• Students will review the vocabulary words by counting their syllables. • Teacher will focus on the use of the correct article (el/la/los) to refer to the organs associated to the five senses. • The five senses words will be placed on the word wall: el olfato, la vista, el oido, el gusto, el tacto, along with the correct article.	- Individual observations in teacher monitoring book. - Checklist to record student's performance on use of correct articles.

Carolyn's lesson plan artifact confirmed her desire to include the student identity as a constant part of her literacy instruction. In Figure 9, Carolyn's lesson plan exemplifies a lesson that will offer a chance for students to share their personal narratives, which will then become part of a classroom big book.

Within this lesson, Carolyn planned to include students' families and talk about similarities and differences with the students as they compiled their classroom-authored book. This instructional practice offered an opportunity to share multiple stories from various life experiences of the students in an environment that was safe and supported by the teacher. Carolyn's lesson is an example of community building and matches the disposition of a critically conscious teacher (Joseph & Evans, 2018).

Figure 9

Explicit Goals in Lesson Plan Artifacts Sample 2

Extension: Language of instruction: English (the other language)
Students create a classroom-authored big book about student families through LEA, focusing on similarities and differences. They then write other personal narratives about major events. These lessons plan for all four language domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Organization of Online Learning Spaces. I learned that the organization and presentation of the online learning space was a main concern of each of the teachers. The transition to a fully online setting was concerning to them, and it was apparent that they did not feel prepared or that there was not enough time to adjust. Amber stated, "We had to figure [online teaching] out while we were doing it!" Despite not feeling prepared for this change, the teachers recognized the importance that culture plays in the classroom environment.

Classroom libraries were a way that Brittany leveraged the online setting to spotlight cultural and linguistic pedagogy. Brittany dedicated a space in the Google Classroom that was for the purpose of promoting the joy of reading to recreate what was important to her practice in an in-person setting. The space was used during the independent reading portion of the literacy instructional time and was open to students at any time. The classroom library was an example of the teacher recognizing the role of language and culture as a medium in teaching and learning (de Jong & Harper, 2008) and showed her explicit planning and practice.

Screenshots of Brittany's Google Classroom Libraries (Figure 10 and Figure 11) provides evidence of intentional planning and preparation on Brittany's behalf to motivate and excite students about reading. Both the Spanish and the English online libraries were created to mimic the realistic feel of a physical library and comfortable reading space. The inclusion of comfortable bean bag chairs and a stuffed teddy bear were included. Brittany shared, "I would have this in my regular classroom if we were in school. Since we aren't in face-to-face school right now, I wanted to recreate this in my online room." The colorful arrangement of the classroom libraries shows decisions to make the space look inviting, comfortable and student-centered. The library space provided options and support for her students to feel confident, so they could enjoy the reading selections that were available.

Figure 10 is a screenshot of the library featuring the Spanish books. Brittany included a variety of titles and would change the text every other week to match the current "big idea for learning across the curriculum." In Figure 10, the wooden bookshelf on the left part of the figure contains the Spanish language books (both fiction and non-fiction) that Brittany included in her instruction during this timeframe.

Figure 10

Independent Reading Google Classroom Library with Hyperlinked Spanish Books

Students accessed the library at any time as the library was located in the online Google Classroom. Students were expected to select a text each day during the asynchronous self-selected reading time and read for a minimum of fifteen minutes. Clicking on a book gave the students several options. Brittany spent time arranging the titles and hyperlinking resources to engage students and support reading comprehension and enjoyment. Each book was hyperlinked and took the student to an e-book that included other supporting experiences, such as having the book read by the author. Brittany commented that there was a lot of use of the classroom library space and students often commented on the books that were included in the library. Brittany recounted a student comment, "[The student thanked me for] having so many books to choose from in Spanish. The student shared that her sisters ask to go to the library so they can listen to more Spanish books." It was evident that Brittany recognized the impact of maintaining the classroom library with more than just English books and added, "I plan on expanding the library

even more to include much more variety. This was a starting point and I plan to go much

bigger."

Figure 11 captures another interactive slide within the Google Classroom Library that

provides language support for the students. Both the English and the Spanish versions of the

library are available in Brittany's online classroom at all times. Students have the option to enjoy

books from either space at any time, and daily reading for enjoyment is a scheduled part of

literacy instruction each day.

Figure 11

Independent Reading Google Classroom Library with Hyperlinked English Books

Differentiation of Instruction. Examples of differentiation to support language learning

(Souto-Manning, 2016) were clear in the instructional approaches that the teachers used in the

online setting. Examples of purposeful differentiation include strategies such as teaching the

necessary vocabulary beforehand**.** Providing language learners with additional materials before

they tackle the main reading increases their success. Amber showed evidence of instructional

strategies that introduced and/or reinforced learning from the online program. She included prior viewing techniques, such as identifying key concepts. An example of this was witnessed during instruction when Amber had students identify the text features in a reading passage. During this activity, students identified words that were bold in the text. Amber explained to the students that the bold words were darker to let the "reader know the word is important for understanding." Amber and the students identified these words throughout the text and the word meaning in context was discussed. Amber explained that she does this preview activity with almost anything they read so that she can "preload their knowledge and prepare them for better comprehension."

Brittany's use of sentence frames was available for her language learners. She explained, "Students that would not attempt a response in the past were finding success using sentence frames. This is huge because some of the students didn't even make an attempt in the past." Brittany also encouraged students to use audio recordings to submit responses and/or speech-to-text features to initiate the writing process. Each of the teachers used a range of home experiences and home contexts within their instruction. In these learning spaces, students summarized, analyzed, problem solved, and thought creatively about what they saw or experienced. Carolyn's big book lesson incorporated learning experiences that encouraged students to share personal narratives and home experiences. The book became a part of the classroom library and could be shared or read by students often.

Carolyn planned differentiated experiences with purposeful language learning at the heart. Inclusion of language games that were adapted to the online setting such as Pictionary or at home scavenger hunts allowed Carolyn to differentiate with a student-centered approach. Altering the process by which students learn information changes the way they are learning. They learn the same information but in a different manner. For example, during a lesson when

students were engaged in a scavenger hunt, one student used a baby picture of a sibling to represent the word excitement. When asked to describe why the picture was chosen, the student explained that a new family member "brought a lot of excitement to our family." Carolyn's choice to build on the students' previous knowledge helps students remember what they already know about a subject, and this increases the likelihood of students retaining the information. Bringing knowledge that the language learners already possess to the forefront of their minds assists in obtaining new information.

Another example of differentiation is evident when Amber discussed how she had her students identify "study buddies" that not only could assist with academic content, but could also reach out and connect with students on a social level. Appropriate relationship-building activities were often a part of asynchronous time so that students could collaborate and learn in social settings. The study buddies change the process by which students learn information. Planning opportunities for the study buddies to work in their first language to complete the task, increased retention of new knowledge and reduced anxiety for language learners.

Brittany's instructional planning template (Figure 6) shows her intentional planning of small groups with the specific goal of targeting the unique needs of learners. She explained,

> There is a need to integrate physical and intellectual breaks in the online presentation that provide a productive time to contemplate and jot down a response to an open-ended relevant question or idea to share with peers, stand up and stretch, or take a thoughtful stroll around their house. We call those brain breaks, and we need them daily."

It was evident that Brittany recognized the importance of brain breaks for all students, but specifically for language learners. She described how brain breaks allow students to take a

short break from learning and refocus their attention. For language learners "they are not only absorbing new content but are processing a new language as well."

These examples of differentiation provided evidence of various avenues that the teachers were using to assist students in acquiring content for processing or making sense of ideas, so that each student could learn with the language supports that they needed. I found that the teachers created flexible pathways through the material, alternative means for students to complete and submit their work, and resources and tools to meet all student needs.

Interactive Features Supporting Language

A second theme that coincided with how teachers leveraged the online setting to enhance culturally sustaining practices was the way the teachers embedded the interactive features of the online environment to support language in the learning experience. I noticed there was a variety of ways that learners were engaged, and that teachers took special care to ensure that they did not just merely move their lesson plan syllabus to an online setting. I found that the teachers illuminated and adapted the tools of the new environment to increase engagement and learning.

Google Meet. Google Meet is a video-communication service developed by Google that is the required online environment in the district, and it continues to be the prominent instructional platform during the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is used for all synchronous classroom instruction by the teachers in this study. I documented how Google Meet offered several opportunities to support language in an interactive fashion including closed caption, the chat feature, cueing systems, and avatars.

Closed Caption. Brittany described an interesting and unexpected benefit of synchronous literacy instruction as she discussed the closed caption feature in Google Meet. She described how she learned from a colleague that you can turn on the closed caption during a Google Meet,

and this provided additional support while also increasing exposure to English language conventions. Brittany said she now keeps the closed-caption function on in all instruction. She explained that before online learning, this would not even have been within the realm of possibility, and now it has become part of the everyday experience. The closed-caption feature during online instruction offers a benefit for language learners by producing a continuous written record of the spoken words, which can assist some students in visually clarifying the words that are being spoken. Although not always 100% accurate, Brittany remarked that the closed-caption feature was not wrong often enough to "cause a lot of confusion."

Interactivity in the Chat. It was also evident that the chat feature was another powerful way to leverage support for language in the online setting. Carolyn explained how the chat feature became a very active and valuable resource in synchronous literacy instruction. She detailed how she used the chat to gain information from students who may not otherwise participate in verbal discussions. She shared that the chat became so active with questions and comments that she felt that the chat feature should be monitored. Carolyn explained how she planned with the paraprofessional to monitor the chat by implementing some specific steps. I observed the literacy instruction in Carolyn's online classroom, and it was noticeable that the chat feature was active throughout instruction, and many times it had more responses than the dialogue in the Google Meet platform. The chat feature can continue to capture student responses even after the oral dialogue topic may have ended or changed. She noted,

> There have been times when the chat continues for several minutes after the lesson ends. Mostly there are students posing a few questions or sharing things that may be off topic. I think its fine for the chat dialogue to go on for a short while, even if it's off topic. At least they are writing to talk to each other!

This chat feature allows for all responses to be represented even if the opportunity to speak out loud is not there. Honoring the student participation as an equal contribution to the classroom discussion was important for many students that who preferred the written mode of communication that the chat feature offered. Since Carolyn had her paraprofessional monitor the chat, the chat could be highly active during instruction. The paraprofessional had specific tasks for monitoring the simultaneous discussion, such as responding to student dialogue, reposting directions that were given, or collecting student questions for the teacher to address. Carolyn noted some students preferred interaction within the chat instead of speaking in class. The teacher indicated that "this could be for a lot of reasons that make sense, but whenever you can make students more engaged, you want to take it and run with it." Some students might feel more confident in responding in the chat feature because it takes away primary focus on them, and they do not have to "think on the spot, but can take their time processing and put it in the chat when they are ready to share." This action by the teacher in collaboration with the paraprofessional is a clear example of leveraging the online setting to create a more culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environment. The teacher is intentionally creating spaces that encourage language sharing where students can express and contribute to the classroom through multiple pathways (e.g., chat feature, verbally, asynchronous discussion posts).

Amber brought a different perspective to the benefits of the chat feature. She described how the chat feature was an extension of classroom procedures. She described that the use of emojs and icons was purposeful in the creation a cueing system for her students, which corresponded with asynchronous learning experiences. During her Google Meet synchronous literacy instruction, I noticed that there was effective use of emojis and icons to further support language learning by providing descriptive images. The images served as cueing systems that

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provided visual support which were associated with learning tasks. In Figure 12, a stack of books

represents a symbol that communicates that there was text for the students to read. This same

visual is used every time this activity (reading) is underway or part of an assigned task. The think

bubble next to the words, "Think of a question," always prompted students to be prepared with a

verbal or written question to add to the discussion. The symbol of a hand holding a pencil always

coincided with a writing exercise. I noted that the hand icon varied to represent a wide range of

tones. Amber explained that she purposefully "changes it up" so that there is no single "skin

color" attached to the icon. She explained that she does this for any icon or emoji that may have

different skin tone options. Amber interrupted the default, or pre-programmed preferences to

purposefully enhance a culturally sustaining learning environment. This focus on challenging the

default, White, monoculture norm, which is typically the only validated image, aligns with a

critically conscious instructional approach. I learned that the teachers were actively challenging

their assumptions and previous practice by increasing their cultural awareness. Their increased

awareness informed decision-making in a variety of ways which showed the teachers valued

student identity.

Figure 12

Effective Images in Chat

Read the paragraph.
Think of one question.
Write your question ⁇ down.

Cueing Systems. Brittany's use of images and icons was not only used in the chat; they

were also used with the same cueing structure in the Google Classroom. Figure 13 demonstrates

how the same images and icons are used to prompt students in the procedural portions of the

lesson. Brittany explained that this became a simple, yet powerful strategy that made

asynchronous experiences easier to "recreate for students once they are working on their own." She added, "At a glance, [students] can see a snapshot of what was covered and what they need to complete."

Figure 13

Use of Cueing Systems in the Google Classroom
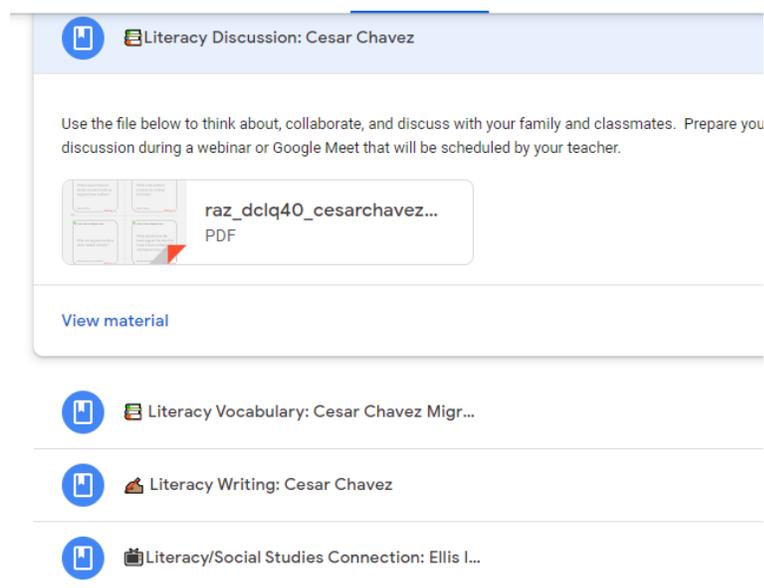
All three teachers organized the look and feel of the space to be representative of the students by using customized images, banners, profile pictures, and/or avatars. The teachers did not retain the default images, but rather customized the space to include the personal images that were representative of the student population. This is in direct correlation with the foundations and dispositions of teachers who embody CSP. Figure 14 is a screenshot of Amber's room where evidence of her decision-making is apparent. Amber provided a description of her classroom layout. She explained,

I wanted to create a space that showed there were a lot of resources for students to use to help transition to the online setting. Just as in the physical classroom, I would include make the space inviting and comfortable so that students want to be there.

Figure 14

Online First-Grade Classroom
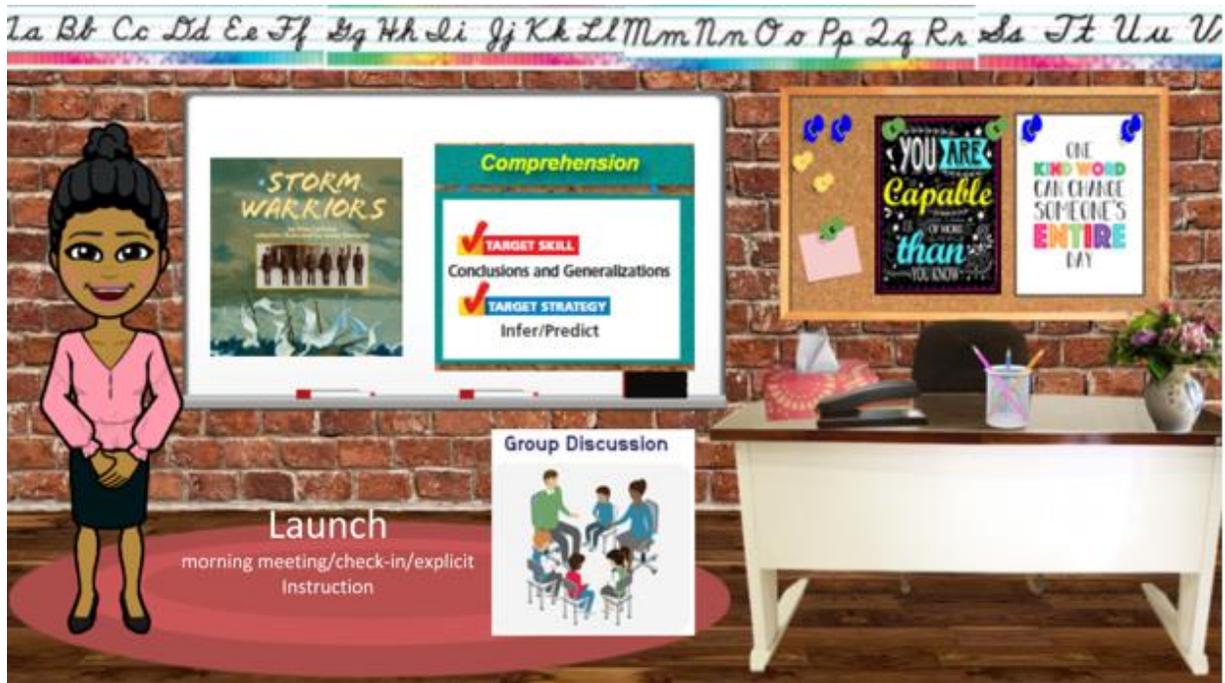
Figure 15 shows options that exist as the default images for English and History within the Google Classroom. Amber stated that she would not use these options because "the banner in the Google Classroom is like your welcome sign. I need mine to be bright and fun, and it should say, you will have fun learning here. I mean this is first grade!"

Figure 15

Default Banners for Google Classroom
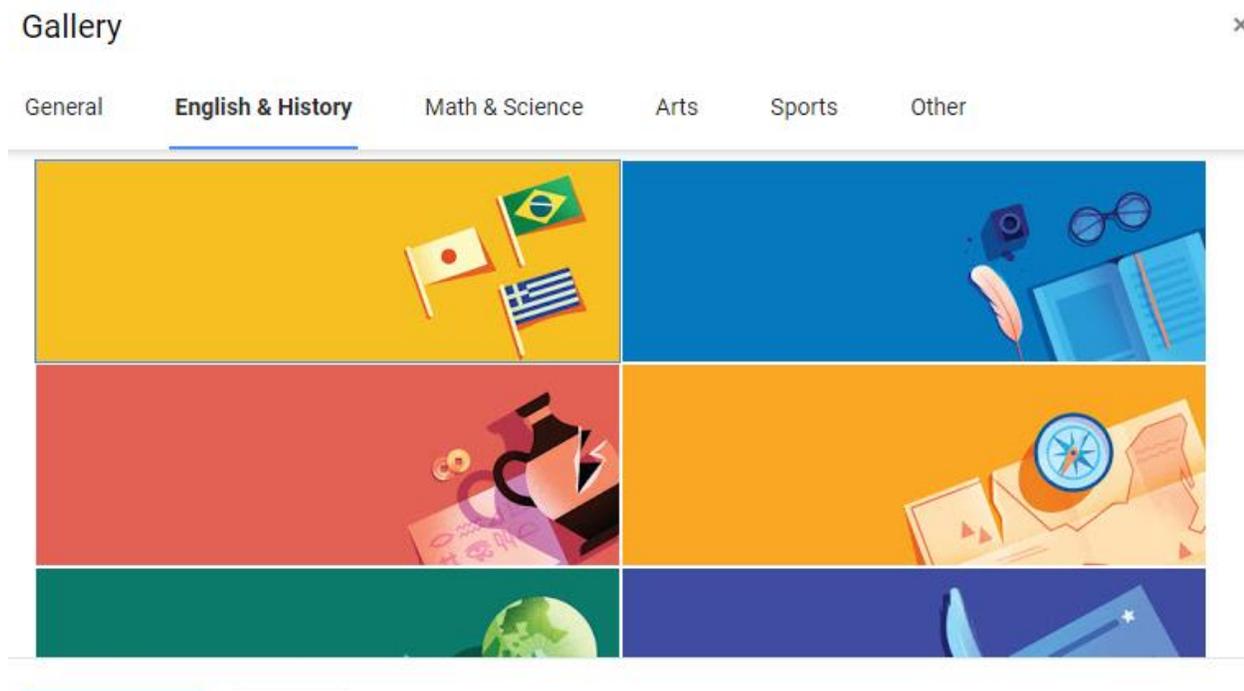
By contrast, the images that teachers used to display classroom banners and greetings featured more positive images of people of color and fewer White-normed portrayals. This is a notable shift that teachers may have made purposefully, and is extremely significant for day-to-day incremental change and student impact. Amber's current Google Classroom Banner can be seen in Figure 16. She commented, "[I] change the banner often to reflect what the theme of learning is, usually I change it at least once or twice a month." Amber explained that this banner

was chosen during their Heroes and Sheroes unit when they read about and studied essential workers in the medical field. Amber noted that she specifically wanted to represent diverse medical professionals so that those positive images are a part of her students' day to day experience.

Figure 16

Amber's Customized Banner in Google Classroom

Avatars. An avatar can be an important device for presenting and adding interest and motivation for students. An avatar gives the students a person to connect with and engages students in the online learning (Morrell, 2012). The use of an avatar and the positive reinforcement that is shown when everyone is realistically represented in the classroom shows specific intention toward cultural representation. Carolyn modeled the realistic and positive image of people of color and encouraged students to ensure that individual classroom profiles contained either a photo or a realistic avatar. Figure 17 captures a sample of a few of the classroom profile pictures/avatars that the students chose to represent their image. The community building that encouraged the inclusivity of a diverse cultural classroom is a benefit of the online setting that challenges the White-normed schooling experiences that are typically displayed in images. In Carolyn's classroom, she stated,

The use of profile pictures or customized avatars was something I wanted to do to honor diversity. I encouraged the students to get creative with their image and to make it represent who they are in our class. I noticed that students will change their avatar profile picture often depending on their mood or change of weather. It is telling sometimes to see how they have changed themselves from one time to the next.

Carolyn explained that she felt it helped the students to feel comfortable in the beginning of the online shift and allowed an inlet of connection between the teacher and student and among students. Carolyn wanted to inspire students to customize the avatar or profile picture further to honor identity and individualism and this practice contributes to more meaningful and impactful literacy instruction. She feels that literacy learning and achievement of students of diverse linguistic backgrounds is improved when educators acknowledge, value, and consider the role of the home language, interaction with students, and students' relationships with the community.

Figure 17

Sample of Carolyn's Student Avatars
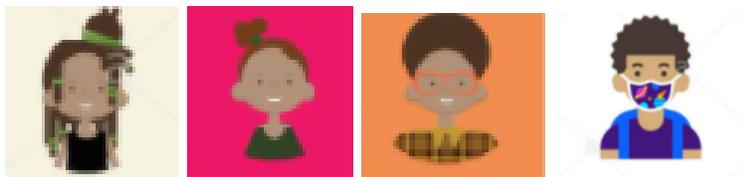
The second finding provided a volume of evidence that substantiated the ways teachers leveraged the online setting to enhance a culturally sustaining learning environment. Examples of planning and implementing sustaining practices were apparent in the lesson artifacts, daily literacy instruction strategies, and classroom environment. The online classroom setting led to the discovery of new practices such as online language supports and interactive features supporting language that had not been fully used by these teachers in the pre-pandemic setting.

Finding 3: Teachers Sought Validation for Decision-Making in their Work with Culturally Sustaining Practices

Based on the interview responses, teachers explained that they relied on their immediate in-school colleagues to inform, confirm, or validate their decision-making. This in-school network determined what and how they planned and implemented literacy instruction. I learned the teachers feel more confident in applying independent decision-making when they feel supported through networks that are larger than themselves and the support is in proximity (grade-level team or partner teacher) to their assignment. In the third finding, teachers' sources of validation and areas of desired sources of validation are highlighted and outlined in the following sections.

Teachers Sources of Validation

Teachers indicated that validation was critical to them when making instructional decisions about culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction. As Amber explained, "talking to other teachers helps me to understand my own thinking better, so I can think more about why I do the things I do and what I am trying to accomplish." Teachers found that listening and validating feelings guided them in learning helpful information that proved crucial in supporting language learning for their students. Amber continued,

> I tend to thrive when I feel like somebody believes in me, just like what we try to do with students. I want to be successful and creative, so I like checking in with a trusted colleague because it helps me feel more secure in the decisions I make. I am constantly striving to do what is considered right, whatever that is. I feel like it changes all the time. Talking it through before trying something and then as a reflective piece afterwards is extremely beneficial for my practice.

I learned from the teacher interview responses that in-school colleagues were the main source of validation among this teacher group. These main sources of validation were likely due to the proximity and the relationships that existed, and the teachers sought to connect with these sources of affirmation on a regular basis. The teachers indicated that they valued the input of their grade-level team, teaching partners, and support staff at the school to inform their decision-making when planning and providing culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction.

Grade-Level Team. Each one of the teachers mentioned some form of grade-level team as an instrumental factor in their decision-making for literacy instruction. It was evident that the need to connect with the grade-level team during the pandemic was even more heightened as the teachers attempted to relieve some of the sense of isolation that they acknowledged earlier as a ramification of the sudden move to online instruction. The teachers identified a desire to be equipped with a strong rationale for personal choices that inform instruction and realized that there is a limit to the level of reasoning and rationale they feel comfortable taking. Carolyn described the significance of the information that the grade-level team offered in the early weeks of school closure due to the pandemic. She explained,

> Right at the start of the pandemic my grade-level team was my only source of
>
> information. There was so much unknown for quite a period of time, I was fearful that I
>
> must be missing something. There was not a lot of information shared about what to do,
>
> so during the beginning weeks of the pandemic, my grade-level team met on our own.
>
> We met by phone and online even before the district communicated any specifics about
>
> meeting. It really was my only line to information.

Carolyn commented that without this lifeline to information she would have felt completely uncertain about what her role was in relation to her current students. She stated, "[Moving to

online] was a scary feeling. I had no idea what I was supposed to be telling the students, let alone how to teach." Carolyn credits the grade-level team as a stabilizing force that provided solid next steps so that she could be an effective support for her students.

In addition to the security that the grade-level team provided for information related to the pandemic, Amber also described how crucial her team was in the process. "[We were] sharing best practices with colleagues, researching, and honing skills so we can offer the best instruction… and learning from each other." Amber said the grade-level conversations challenged her to deepen her understanding and push her into new ways of instruction for the achievement of all students. She explained, "Discussing these ideas and putting them into the context of the online setting was a huge shift for the entire team and we relied on each other heavily." Amber provided an example explaining how the teachers created their own grade-level Google Classroom, which helped them to create content collaboratively and then use it within each of their classrooms. When Amber described the benefit of this approach among her team, she stated,

> It was extremely helpful to collaborate and co-construct online with the team. I think many of us didn't realize that efficiently we could have the same types of discussions about students, and to do our planning in an online setting. I think a lot of us will continue these online formats when in-person instruction starts again just because they actually are a more effective way of getting the same work done. The grade-level Google Classroom was a place where all of our expertise could be contained in one place, and we could all benefit from the expertise of another.

When Brittany talked about the value of her grade-level team, she emphasized that "I get fresh ideas and am able to share successful strategies with others." She said that being a part of

her grade-level team and participating in their regular meetings was impactful when she made decisions about literacy instruction. In my team I feel "genuine and sincere respect" and know that the team is always "willing to share ideas and resources so we can operate from common goals." Brittany also labeled her team as highly effective because they are "willing to divvy up responsibilities in a fair, equitable way." It was evident that Brittany embraced the power of the group and felt the team was stronger and more effective working together on behalf of the students. The grade-level team is essential to the planning process itself, because it generates opportunity for a broader perspective and the outcome flows into the instructional practice of each individual teacher.

Teaching Partners. In between grade-level meetings, the importance of the teachers being able to reach out to their grade level teaching partner was also significant. Amber shared that "similar to what happens in the classroom, it's helpful to bounce ideas off of one person before you bring it to the larger group." Amber explained that she needs to build a level of confidence in her thinking and practice before sharing it with a larger group.

Carolyn stated that her teaching partner was always her "first go-to." She commented, "[My teaching partner] has been teaching longer than me and can answer questions before I even know I have them. I appreciate that my teacher partner respects what I am trying to do, but pushes me to solve the problem using a different perspective." Explaining the benefits her partner teacher provides, Carolyn continued,

> She listens, but knows when to make me pause and listen. She gives me a safe space to vent, air, complain and feel defeat because sometimes you need to do that with someone who understands exactly what you're going through. I love that she sees how things can be done differently and celebrates my success.

I noted that the teaching partner provided a sense of security and safety related to instructional decision-making among the teachers, and this partner was often relied upon to build confidence and comfort in decision-making before presentation to the larger grade-level team.

ESL Teaching Support Staff. In addition to the grade-level and teacher partner supports, I found that the teachers felt the in-school support staff was an important asset and impacted their decision-making about culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction. The in-school support staff, referred to as the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, was assigned to work with teachers and students in their grade level. Amber illustrated the importance of the relationship with the ESL teacher,

> The ESL teacher that I work with really helps me improve my own teaching skills. She helps me to step out of my comfort zone and try new creative ideas with the goal of improving the way I teach language learners. And she does this without making me feel like I am failing, it is a supportive style that motivates me to want to learn more and plan more collaborative time with her.

I noted that Amber's description of the ESL support staff could be described as similar to a mentor and she was very clear about the advantages of collaboration and its impact on her decisions.

Carolyn had a similar account when she described how her ESL support teacher always "brought my thinking back to the perspective of the student." She added, "The ways that [the teacher] would describe what the language learners might be thinking or feeling" was a significant and worthwhile exercise for her. Carolyn believed that understanding through the learners' eyes was an important mindset to bring to her teaching and it impacted the types of teaching and learning experiences that she planned for her students. Carolyn expressed that she

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learned a lot about how assessment should be approached through her ESL support teacher, especially in the area of literacy. She explained,

> I didn't realize how much I didn't know about assessment for language learners and ways to accommodate more equitable assessment. Very simple, yet powerful actions can make a huge difference. The ESL support teacher explained how some students may need extra time to decipher and understand the meaning of an assessment's content or to formulate their thoughts and ideas into sentences and paragraphs. Raising my awareness to building this into my practice was a nudge I needed.

The teachers' descriptions of the benefits of collaboration with the ESL support teachers highlights the importance of collegial relationships. These collegial relationships provided the teachers with a supportive and critical lens, which helped to shape effective literacy instruction. The teachers felt their instructional practices improved and students benefitted from the learning they obtained from the ESL teacher's knowledge and support.

Desired Validation of Decision-Making

In addition to describing the support of in-school colleagues, the teachers indicated a desire for an increase in the circumstances that allow for these collaborative relationships to flourish. They talked about their need for other sources of validation including spaces for collaboration, networks beyond the classroom, and professional organizations.

Spaces for Collaboration. The teachers expressed the need to have collaborative spaces where they can validate the decisions they make. They talked specifically about the desire for more time and opportunity to confirm their practices through increased engagement with their grade-level colleagues. More time was noted as something that each teacher indicated was needed for grade-level meetings. I learned that teachers highly valued this collaborative time,

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and they wished that more time was built into meeting structures. To this point, Carolyn articulated,

> Our team never has enough time to cover everything we hope to cover and so we are perpetually carrying topics over from week to week. True collaboration is a lengthy process, and it does not happen best when there is only thirty minutes here and thirty minutes there. The team would make so much more progress if we were able to collaborate uninterrupted for an extended period of time. I can only imagine what we could create if we were afforded this extra time.

Brittany added that if more time was available, more consistency and coherence could be achieved and outcomes for students would improve. She shared that her team often uses their time to create shared lessons and assessments, which they all use as models for their units. Brittany believed that they had only a few samples because of lack of time, and more time would increase the development of common objectives and assessments that have language learning as a priority.

In addition to grade-level collaborations, the teachers also desired more collaborative opportunities within the district professional development (PD). Related to this finding, the teachers verified that more collaboration was preferred, and further specified the need for the district to systematically set up the collaboration time as part of ongoing teacher PD. Brittany suggested "more collaboration time for planning lessons with bigger groups of teachers should be a part of district PD" structures. Offering collaboration time district-wide would "protect the time and widen the interaction across teachers and schools," which made Brittany feel this designation was needed.

Another benefit was offered by Carolyn who explained that if the PD was built in, it could include more contributors such as "district administrators and coaches who could actively participate in and support collaboration meetings, providing guidance and feedback as necessary." Including these other stakeholders could offer another level of support during implementation which would be impactful for teachers.

Networks beyond the Classroom. In addition to the increase in spaces for collaboration, the teachers expressed a desire for learning that reached beyond the experiences of their classroom or their school setting. Responses that teachers provided indicated a yearning to be involved in a bigger, more diverse network of educators. Amber explained,

> I would love to have more time to see what is happening outside of my classroom door and even outside of this school. Sometimes I think my experiences are limited because I feel isolated about what is going on in the bigger world of education. A lot of my time and learning is based on what is happening right here in my school. I have a cousin who teaches in Texas, and from talking to her, I know that things can be very different depending on where you teach. I find this really fascinating and hope that I can learn more about what is happening in other parts of the country and even around the world.

Amber is very clear about her desire to gain information from sources that have a different perspective or context than her own. She values the possibility of interacting with educators from around the world and figures her involvement may provide her with more knowledge and understanding that would benefit her students. Amber further explained that she may have this feeling because "I have never lived anywhere else but here, and sometimes I think that my lack of experiences in different places, and with different people, could limit my perspective." Amber

is acknowledging the limitations of her experiences and is actively seeking out ways to increase her awareness of diversity and how it impacts her instructional decision-making.

Carolyn discussed that she finds it valuable to stay connected to a variety of educator communities. She stated,

Since the pandemic, I have joined a few online communities through social media because I was mostly looking for ways to incorporate technology. What I found was there was a lot of different kinds of online communities for sharing resources and ideas, and they are not all created equally! It took a lot of time to navigate through all of the various groups, and sometimes it was not worth the effort. It's kind of hit or miss with a lot of them.

Carolyn was grateful for the options that existed in the online communities, but wished that the process of finding useful information was not "so time-consuming." She added, "The online communities are filled with one rabbit hole after the other." Although Carolyn valued her membership in these online communities, she expressed a need for more time and organization, so that she could efficiently navigate through them. She mentioned that quality was a concern and she added, "I often check with others before implementing some of the stuff I find in these communities, it saves me time to know if the resource is of good quality." Carolyn wished for connections outside of her classroom and puts the need for high-quality resources as a priority.

Brittany was more direct in the reasoning for her desire to connect with others. Brittany revealed that it was her goal to interact with teachers that "don't look exactly like me." Brittany's ability to assess her own knowledge and behaviors is a skill vital to student success for language learners. She stated, "I know that I need to continually grow my knowledge, and this means growing my network." Brittany is seeking experiences that build her self-awareness and

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challenge her assumptions about others in the larger educational community. She is acknowledged that her White, mainstream experiences should be broadened, and she is pursuing additional avenues for growth.

Professional Organizations. The teachers specifically named membership in professional organizations as a different type of networking outside of the local experience they sought. Professional organizations offer the opportunity for educators to connect with and learn from other educators in their field, which opens unknown possible opportunities for collaboration, leads to new discoveries, and helps all educators improve by comparing methods of teaching. Professional networks provide teachers with a sense of freedom, by stepping outside the school doors and the local context to consider ways to improve the schools and systems where they work. These external professional networks and communities can promote divergent thinking because they acknowledge that teachers have unique insights that can improve education and accelerate student achievement. Online networks are especially powerful because they enable some of the best teaching minds in a state, region, or nation to bond together into powerful professional learning communities and in doing so, exposing members to multiple perspectives that expand their thinking. Making connections with fellow educators allows relationships to form that greatly impact education. The teachers realized they had a desire to be a part of a learning community that is inclusive of a broader community to move beyond a single local source of information. I learned that the teachers felt participation in professional organizations outside of the district would be a valuable in an ever-changing field. Amber explained,

> It's nice to have access to the latest research in education through the journals. Having
> this information available through articles or emails that come automatically ensures that

I won't be out of the loop on the latest educational studies. I also don't have to rely on

others to bring the information to me. I can review and use the information and research

that is most useful for me and not necessarily be stuck with a topic that is given to me by

someone else.

Other benefits to professional membership were captured by Carolyn. She stated,

I like the idea of having contacts outside of my immediate group of people so that I can

explore new topics or establish relationships with other experienced educators. I can learn

a lot from their insights and guidance and having some distance from my immediate

colleagues offers a nice change of pace.

Networking with fellow educators and getting access to research is away for the teachers to grow

as professionals and maintain relevance within education. Moreover, the educators have

demonstrated their propensity for lifelong learning.

Conclusion

In the examination of the first-grade teachers instructional decision-making as they

navigated culturally sustaining practices, I found that the teachers' experiences represented their

daily lives, and I also observed how the pandemic and shift to online learning has significantly

impacted teaching and learning and the lived experiences of the teachers. The phenomenon of

the cultural and linguistic affinity of teachers yields insight into the teacher decision-making

process. Decision-making has been grounded in self-selection among teachers and included to be

a major factor in this study. During the pandemic, teachers depended on these familiar ways of

decision-making to ground their decisions, but had to determine how to adjust to the current

online environment. As teachers navigated into the online experience, their desire for validation

of their decision-making was heightened. Teachers trusted and reached out to their established

in-school networks as a secure and safe place where the validation they sought could be

confirmed through discussion and collaboration.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The increase in the number of students that speak nonmajoritarian languages in U.S. urban classrooms underscores the urgent need to increase inclusive and sustaining language pedagogy among mainstream teachers. Disrupting the history of English-only education policy and definitions of proficiency that are solely based on White, middle-class, monocultural, and monolingual norms of educational achievement is imperative to critically conscious teacher practice (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Students in urban classrooms come prepared for learning with various languages, dialects, regionalisms, registers, and other linguistic variations (Souto-Manning, 2016). Within a critically conscious teacher framework, mainstream teachers incorporate students' language assets and challenge assimilationist mindsets that place Dominant American English (DAE) as the only pathway to language proficiency and literacy development. As supported by research on the incongruity of the backgrounds of teachers and their students (Alim & Paris, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2006, Lucas & Grinberg, 2008), when English monolingualism is seen as the norm (Souto-Manning, 2016), misconceptions and implicit bias towards students is perpetuated (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Through the development of critically conscious examinations of practice, understandings of language proficiency, and implementation of asset-based approaches, pedagogical positions shift beyond the White, middle-class norms that linger as a dominating force when dictating educational achievement in urban classrooms (Baker-Bell, 2020; Paris, 2016). The movement to advance beyond narrowed, monolingual ideologies grounds my examination of the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction.

This study of teachers' experiences drew from the orientations of phenomenological research to document what was sensed, perceived, and emerged from the teachers' experiences

(Moustakas, 1994). The work was guided by three salient questions: (a) What are the experiences of first-grade mainstream teachers as they identify and plan to implement linguistically sustaining strategies during English literacy instruction in classrooms with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages? (b) Which language strategies do first-grade mainstream teachers implement during English literacy instruction, and which factors influenced the use of these practices? and (c) What actions are mainstream first-grade teachers taking to build inclusive experiences for all languages in online settings?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings as they align with culturally sustaining pedagogy, considerations of the critically conscious teacher foundations (Joseph & Evans, 2018) and the de Jong & Harper (2008) dimensions. From there, I present the Teacher Habits of Culturally Sustaining Practice Model that I conceptualized based on the findings that emerged in the study. The model outlines implications for mainstream teachers and district leaders as they plan for and facilitate instruction within culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments. I then consider the limitations of the study and recommendations for further inquiry. Finally, the conclusion provides a summative reflection of the significance of this inquiry.

Description of Findings

Three findings were uncovered as a result of this study: (a) teacher decision-making was oriented in a variety of self-selected professional growth experiences; (b) teachers leveraged the online setting to enhance a culturally sustaining learning environment; and (c) teachers sought validation for decision-making in their work with culturally sustaining practices.

Table 5 contains a summary of the findings as they relate to the research questions guiding this study.

Table 5

Summary of Research Questions and Findings

Research Question	Finding
RQ 1: What are the experiences of first-grade mainstream teachers as they identify and plan to implement linguistically sustaining strategies during English literacy instruction in classrooms with speakers of nonmajoritarian languages?	F1: Teacher Decision-Making Oriented in a Variety of Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences F2: Teachers Leverage the Online Setting to Enhance a Culturally Sustaining Learning Environment F3: Teachers Sought Validation for Decision-Making in Their Work with Culturally Sustaining Practices
RQ 2: Which language strategies do first-grade mainstream teachers implement during English literacy instruction, and which factors influenced the use of these practices? How do mainstream teachers respond to nonmajoritarian languages? In what ways do mainstream teachers plan for and use language during literacy instruction?	F1: Teacher Decision-Making Oriented in a Variety of Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences F2: Teachers Leverage the Online Setting to Enhance a Culturally Sustaining Learning Environment
RQ 3: What actions are mainstream first-grade teachers taking to build inclusive experiences for all languages in online settings?	F1: Teacher Decision-Making Oriented in a Variety of Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences F2: Teachers Leverage the Online Setting to Enhance a Culturally Sustaining Learning Environment F3: Teachers Sought Validation for Decision-Making in Their Work with Culturally Sustaining Practices

The first research question provided the opportunity for teachers to share their lived experiences by describing the strategies they identified while they planned culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction. The data revealed that evidence in all three findings was connected to teacher identification and planning of culturally and linguistically sustaining

literacy instruction. The second research question provided an opportunity for teachers to express what influenced their decision making on the implementation of language strategies and generated connections to Finding 1 (teacher self-selected growth experiences) and Finding 2 (levering the online setting). The third research question was an inquiry about the actions that teachers take to build inclusive experiences, and I found there were links from this question to all three findings.

In describing the relationship of the findings to the research questions, it became apparent to me that the findings are not isolated observations, rather they have an important interconnectedness. In their classrooms, teachers had the practice of making decisions oriented in self-selected professional growth experiences (Finding 1). When the pandemic occurred, the teachers continued to ground their decisions in their choices, but their choices were then leveraged within the mandated online environment (Finding 2). As the teachers worked in their online settings, their decision-making was situated in a pattern of seeking validation outside of themselves to confirm their decision-making process (Finding 3). The concentric circles represented in Figure 18 illustrate my interpretation of how the three findings relate to one another and shape the habits of the teachers' practices.

Figure 18

Relationship of Study Findings and Impact on Teacher Practice

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In the following sections, the three findings and their connections to the frameworks will be discussed in the context of the teachers' habits of practice when enhancing a culturally sustaining learning environment.

Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences

Finding 1, represented as the innermost concentric circle in Figure 18, presented evidence that the teachers of this study have gained an abundance of knowledge of research-based practices. I documented the teachers' understandings of strategies and techniques that supported vocabulary development, authentic text engagement, and student choice and voice. The evidence of daily decision-making leaves no doubt that the teachers were committed to meeting the needs of their students. Past learning experiences led the teachers to consider a variety of options related to professional growth that had proven successful for them. The teachers named their formal education, district professional development and resources (including grant sponsored PD) as influential in their CSP decision-making. They further mentioned that the use of their own identified resources and the support of colleagues was essential in CSP development and growth in their current literacy instruction. It was apparent that the teachers consistently pursued resources in their commitment to be relevant and responsive in their work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Beyond this practical knowledge base, however, a critically conscious teacher disposition calls for deeper understandings of how language learners experience school (Freire, 2005; Valenzuela, 2016). Strides towards a just and inclusive education can be made by considering professional growth beyond resources and strategies to include the creation of spaces for critical collaboration and the cultivation of the democratic culture of student talk.

Beyond Resources and Strategies. To effectively work with students to counter

dominant English and assimilationist paradigms (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010), teachers

need the professional spaces to move beyond resources and strategies to delve more deeply into

why culturally sustaining practices matter in their teaching. This is significant to a

phenomenological lens that values teachers' lived experiences and the factors outside of school

that impact the conditions and decisions inside of school (Milner, 2012). It was clear the teachers

of this study held student needs central, and they demonstrated a foundational tenet of critical

consciousness in their persistent efforts to seek meaningful and relevant professional growth

experiences reflective of culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Amber, Brittany, and

Carolyn navigated the expectations of the district alongside their medley of knowledge sources,

yet it was also clear that the teachers wanted a more synthesized, supportive avenue from which

to grow as professionals. As I reflect on this finding, I ask: How could the practices of the

teachers of this study be more deeply oriented in and supported from a critically conscious

perspective? Two key factors of the teachers' practices emerge as active responses to my

reflection: Building critical spaces for teacher collaboration and expanding on the democratic

cultural of student talk.

Critical Spaces for Teacher Collaboration. I learned that the teachers highly valued and

relied on the collaborations they had with their colleagues. Professional growth experiences in

this study reflected discussions with teaching partners, grade level team members, and the

English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher support staff. The de Jong and Harper (2008)

dimensions of expertise remind us that mainstream teachers need a contextual understanding of

bilingual learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, knowledge and skills related to the

instructional role of language and culture, and familiarity with policies and practices to ensure

inclusivity. Designing collaborative spaces that expand the knowledge base for mainstream teachers can create the conditions for collaborative spaces that increase critical consciousness (Freire, 2005; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Ensuring pathways of collaboration to include content that covers the study of politics of surrounding districts, communities, and the historical accounts (which have impacted language education), pushes teacher practice beyond just the strategies and resources (Bartolomé, 2004; Freire, 2005; Valenzuela, 2016). Professional spaces that incorporate a safe place for teacher discussion that includes the historical, sociocultural, and political topics ignite opportunities for teacher reflection and analysis of language learning experiences (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Opportunities that give time for teachers to dissect current district and state language policy enhance teacher professional growth in a sustaining manner. The evolution of these policies and their impact on the local and state context add to the understanding of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Creating dialogic and collaborative spaces for teachers results in classroom environments that embody socially just practices upholding equitable access, critical thought, and fair student outcomes (Gillette & Schultz, 2009).

Democratic Culture of Student Talk. Critically conscious teachers recognize the power of student voice in every aspect of learning, and they strive to create opportunities for every voice to be significant. I learned that teachers sought ways to include student talk, which gave students time to connect and share with their classmates. Carolyn's classroom provided an example of typical ways of student talk when she created expert panels in her classroom. During these panels, students would discuss and answer questions from other students regarding the text they were reading. This illustration is an example of providing a space for student dialogue,

which can be further expanded upon as teachers grow democratic student talk experiences in their classrooms (Alexander, 2008; Delpit, 1988).

An important distinction must be made to ensure that student talk is approached from a democratic stance that is purposeful in classrooms that create opportunities for students to express their ideas or to make significant decisions that affect their schooling experience (Freire, 1970; Valenzuela, 2016). Instruction, curriculum, and policy decision-making should include the direct voices of students, their experiences, perceptions and preferences (Baker-Bell, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014). The language practices of students of nonmajoritarian languages are often deemed problematic as measured against White, monolingual norms (Alim & Paris, 2017). Critically conscious teachers apply lenses of raciolinguistic ideologies and pedagogies that elevate how students are given the space and means to build their racial and linguistic identities (Rosa & Flores, 2017). In doing so, teachers cultivate self-cognizance in students by building their metalinguistic awareness (Daniels & Varghese, 2020; Haddix, 2008; Nieto, 2000). In other words, teachers center students' understandings of language by guiding them to think about the power of language and engage them in thinking and talking about how they use language in the representation of themselves and their ideas (Bialystok et al., 2014). Although the teachers highly-valued student voice in their practices, these deeper metalinguistic and democratic conversations with students were not observed with the classrooms of this study.

Effective practices of student engagement include linguistic and raciolinguistic practices (Alim & Paris, 2017; Rosa & Flores, 2017), and the role of the critically conscious teacher is to reflect on the development of their own language practices, identify the features of languages used, and apply critical lenses to process language ideologies. The understanding of appropriate

use of specific terms about language and language learning (i.e., language acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, sociolinguistics) is essential for mainstream teachers of literacy. These understandings equip teachers with the ability to analyze student's language through critical lenses that reject deficit thinking and inform their pedagogy. Critically conscious teachers recognize and resist ways in which students' linguistic repertoires are framed as incorrect, unsophisticated, deficient, or inappropriate. A long tradition of sociolinguistic research has confirmed that widely held beliefs about marginalized groups' language practices are inequitable and discriminatory with respect to the standard linguistic norms (Baker-Bell, 2020). Sociolinguistic ideologies have influenced a shift in the politics of language education to dissolve subtractive versions of teaching that stigmatize students' language forms to instead move toward an asset-based, responsive vision of understanding students' language identities (Baker-Bell, 2017; Manning & Villanueva, 2018; Orelus, 2013).

Teachers who are cultivating culturally and linguistically sustaining practices are able to name them and consider their positionality in how they are designing and implementing equitable learning experience for all students. The inclusion of raciolinguistic ideologies takes shape in curriculum, instruction, and authentic assessments of multilingual learners and gives students a sense of empowerment and validation (Paris, 2016).

Leverage the Online Setting

The middle concentric circle in Figure 18 represents the second finding, leveraging the online setting. Study data showed that teachers turned the context of the online learning environment into an opportunity to increase a culturally sustaining learning environment. Although the sudden shift to fully online learning was unexpected and the teachers expressed they initially felt unprepared, data revealed that the online environment provided opportunity for

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Amber, Brittany, and Carolyn to demonstrate CSP shifts in their daily literacy planning and instruction. The teachers identified explicit cultivations of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that may not have been possible in an in-person setting. Because of the unexpected transport to a remote teaching platform, the teachers' pedagogical literacy practices shifted from the conventional in-person approaches towards online pedagogical literacy techniques. This naturally pushed the teachers to broaden their conceptions of online teaching. Even so, critically conscious teaching would suggest a more purposeful divergence toward practices that center the online platform to more fully consider student-centered learning and the nuances of online instruction that move beyond "just good teaching" (de Jong & Harper, 2008).

  Critically Conscious Online Teaching. The teachers in this study have shown development in their critical consciousness as they transitioned to the online learning platform in an unexpected and abrupt fashion. Amber, Brittany, and Carolyn used their previous experiences and resources to begin merging critical consciousness and online pedagogy. They recognized the need to create experiences, using a new toolbox of online resources, and they experimented in the presentation of culturally and linguistically sustaining online practices. For example, they leveraged language supports, such as the chat feature, closed captioning, and the implementation of avatars that moved beyond White monoculturalism. As the teachers in this study have shown, the options for the fusion of CSP into online settings are available. Although, specifics about critical online teaching were not explicitly stated in the frameworks grounding this study, using the culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2014) and critically conscious (Evans, 2020) perspectives, the promise of a deeper, more student-oriented approach can be conceptualized. Two examples are presented here to consider purposeful student-centered learning and the online evolution beyond "just good teaching" (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

Student-Centered Learning. Evidence of the ways teachers in this study incorporated opportunities for student participation and interactivity during instruction was visible, and prospects for student generated learning gave way to forging a stronger critical consciousness. In one example from Amber's classroom, she described the way she used the chat feature effectively. She explained that she supported learners by providing visuals (i.e., icons, emjois, graphics, banners) to support written language in the chat portion of the Google Meet lesson. While selecting the visual representation, Amber intentionally made the choice to ensure representation of the various skin tones of the students in her classroom. This practice shows an awareness of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, yet to deepen the criticality of such practices, transformative teachers would accompany this action by engaging with their students in a conversation (Alexander, 2008) about why these visuals were selected. In doing so, students can build awareness and understanding about inclusion of their identity and the many modalities and forms that could be used to express who they are (Alim, 2011). While increasing this awareness in students, the critically conscious teacher can open the path for students to select their own visuals in their writing. When students generate their own representations, and are able to provide rationale for their thinking, it develops their understanding and confidence about how their identities, languages, and cultures can be elevated in their learning experiences, specifically in the online arena.

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned in this study is that all students need to be seen and heard. Before they will fully engage their minds in the classroom, students need to believe that their teacher wants to know, and has an understanding of, who they are. Students form their identities through their experiences over time—positive and/or negative—and based on those experiences, they may categorize themselves as *good* or *bad*. These categorizations lead

students to build a perception about themselves, which is further enforced (or disrupted) based on the language that is used with them (by teachers, peers, and/or family members). Over time, students' thoughts and behaviors (Brown, 2011) are shaped by what they are taught to believe and what they hear from educators who are inherently in positions of power. Students that are in classrooms where they are taught to abandon their cultural language for the dominant English language may categorize their language as bad or not good enough (Baker-Bell, 2020).

In another example, Carolyn wanted to inspire students to customize the avatar to embrace student identity and individualism. She felt that literacy learning and achievement of students of diverse linguistic backgrounds is improved when educators acknowledge, value, and consider the role of the home language, interaction with students, and students' relationships with the community. As Carolyn implemented in her online classroom, student-centered learning begins with creating opportunity for student selection and expression (Smitherman, 1995). The student avatars are an example of how to explore student-centered approaches. Key to the implementation of student-created avatar use is the meaningful dialogue that accompanies the use of this online approach. When embracing these practices through a culturally sustaining mindset, teachers do not see students' languages, literacies, or ways of being as marginal or as something simply to be added to the existing curriculum (Souto-Manning, 2016). Rather, these facets of students' selves and communities must be centered meaningfully in classroom learning through dialogic engagement across units and projects (Alexander, 2008; Baker-Bell, 2020).

The need to concentrate on the nuances of online learning are not specifically included in the de Jong and Harper (2008) or critically conscious (Joseph & Evans, 2018) frameworks, but are essential to the commitment of a critical online approach. Consideration of how teacher practice converts to online modalities is a key starting point to understanding that the direct

transference of effective instructional practice accepted within in-person settings, does not always transfer to quality teaching in online environments (Davis & Roblyer, 2005). Teachers with limited or no prior online teaching experience may be inclined to transfer traditional approaches to the online classroom and maintain approaches-as-usual (effective or not) (Baran et al., 2011). When teachers merely try to recreate what they do in-person in the online format, it can cause disengagement, frustration, and disjointed learning experiences. Most importantly, these practices may not be inclusive of student culture, language, and identity (Kukulska-Hulme & Pegrum, 2018). It is more useful to recognize how online learning formats can create new and different experiences, specifically, the ways that critical consciousness intersects with existing online pedagogy. Critically conscious online teachers seek professional growth that fosters student-centered interaction and communication with and between students during the online learning experiences (Baran, et.al., 2011). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and develop the different set of skills for teaching in online learning environments, particularly how critically conscious teachers incorporate CSP in literacy instruction (Bartolomé, 2004).

The teachers of this study found ways in the online setting to tap into objectives that positively impacted learner's confidence, creativity, and investment in their own learning and growth. Digging further into the curriculum and lesson development with students at the center would open the door to many online options. When students are encouraged to generate ideas and share personal stories with their teacher, they are engaged in meaningful conversations with each other and their teachers. When this happens, critical reflection becomes a guiding force to student-centered learning, and equity in teaching is underway.

Student-centered instruction encourages students' choices, promotes learning in ways that meets their needs, and is designed to empower learners to understand their unique strengths, ask

more questions, and pursue their personal goals. According to Paris & Alim (2017), CSP "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). This culturally sustaining perspective centers youth at the core of equitable schooling and sees the "outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive" (p. 1). Opportunities for learners to share their work in student-led exhibitions ensure students have an authentic audience and are doing work that they value. Student-centered, activated learning is about moving students from passively responding toward actively engaging with purpose to reach a desired goal or outcome (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). When students have an authentic purpose and audience beyond their teacher to share what they are learning, they are more motivated to learn and often go above and beyond minimal expectations (Souto-Manning, 2016). Culturally conscious teachers are nimble and create online learning experiences that reflect the context and the resources to most effectively meet the needs of every student. In the next section, student-centered approaches are further explored from the perspective that critical online teaching is understood as moving beyond "just good teaching."

Beyond "Just Good Teaching" Online. Adaptation to fully online instruction propelled the teachers in this study to seek growth experiences regarding how to use digital platforms effectively for CSP literacy instruction. During the pandemic, the teachers experienced a sense of loss, but there were also pedagogical gains. According to Code, et. al. (2020), brick and mortar practices are not intended to simply be moved over to online spaces. Teaching that does not consider the vast differences between being physically present and interactions solely online is not conducive to effective and critically conscious practices. The application of "just good teaching" practices that were intended for monolingual English speakers, such as activating prior knowledge, using cooperative learning, developing process writing, and employing graphic

organizers or hands-on activities (de Jong & Harper, 2005), cannot be the only techniques that critically conscious teachers use. Amber, Brittany, and Carolyn showed evidence of explicit planning and practice, which included the role of language and culture as a medium in teaching and learning (de Jong & Harper, 2008) in their lesson plan artifacts and instruction. From a culturally sustaining, critically conscious perspective, I ask, *What is needed beyond "just good teaching"?*

More evidence of teacher critical consciousness could be cultivated in the ways that teachers go beyond academic outcomes (Joseph & Evans, 2018) to include language, culture, and identity as asset-based approaches in the online setting. Building opportunities for students to be the producers of academic content rather than consumers. This gives students agency to include their cultural and linguistic identities in their experiences and empowers them to engage in authentic learning. For instance, Carolyn described the online language games (i.e., Kahoot, Scavenger Hunt, Pictionary) that were played during her literacy time. Carolyn selected these games based on activities that she used in the past with her students. She adapted the game to the online setting to include additional interactivity, yet most of the components were replicated from the in-person version. As teachers advance their critical consciousness, ways for students to be producers of content can exist by having them author and become creators of the language games they play (Code et al., 2020). Many students have coding experience or could become learners of coding language. This application of skills empowers students as creators of their narratives and establishes an intersection for language and literacy learning (Evans, 2020). Students can also become facilitators of their interaction in other online features, such as creating content for the chat dialogue and preparing questions, discussion starters, and visuals to support the lesson. The development of these CSP skills among teachers is vital (Souto-Manning, 2016),

and mechanisms for validation of teacher decision-making is necessary (Butler, 2007) to build teacher confidence visible in literacy classrooms.

Validation for Decision-Making

The outermost circle in Figure 18 represents the third finding, validation for decision-making. The need for teachers to feel validated in their choices was extremely important to them, and this need was further heightened due to the conditions of schooling during the pandemic. The teachers of the study expressed a feeling of isolation and lack of information, which caused them greater feelings of uncertainty in all aspects of teaching. My study revealed that in-school networks were the main, and sometimes only, point of contact for the teachers. Amber, Brittany, and Carolyn all credited the existing relationships with grade-level team members, partner teachers, and the ESL support teacher as critical lifelines during the in-person closure. Increasing critical consciousness in teachers includes planning for and building teacher agency outside of the in-school support system.

Planning for and Building Teacher Agency. The pandemic revealed that teachers shouldered the burden of navigating every aspect of the transition to fully online learning with little or delayed system-wide support. This revealed that the system structures either broke down or were not in place to begin with. One thing that was learned because of this breakdown, is that even with the return to in-person schooling, there would not be a return to "normal" pre-pandemic ways of conducting school. Teachers learned different and more effective ways of "doing school" which they planned to continue as part of their regular practice moving into the future. Teachers in this study revealed that they felt successful when others believed in and supported them. In the next section, a discussion ensues regarding how this type of teacher support can be augmented through the development of hybrid forms of critical collaboration.

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"I Tend to Thrive When People Believe in Me". Amber's words struck me as powerful and seemed to summarize the sentiments that the teachers expressed about the events of the past year. When the educational system structures broke down, many teachers felt that they were alone. The safety nets they relied upon were broken, or they were never there from the beginning. Teachers struggled with their instructional decision-making, and searched for affirmation for their choices and practices. As described in Chapter 4, Amber stated, "I tend to thrive when I feel like somebody believes in me…" when she told me how important it was for her to maintain her success and instructional creativity. She expressed how essential it was for her to check-in with her colleagues in order to feel secure in her decisions.

Amber's honest account is not the first time this feeling has been expressed. Teachers need to feel validated in their choices. Validation is the recognition and acceptance of their own decision-making by someone else. Validation is part of being interdependent and relying on the feedback and encouragement of others around us (Butler, 2007). All teachers seek validation, even experienced and seasoned teachers need it from time to time. External validation assists with the articulation of ideas and the sharing of ideas, which is beneficial for everyone involved (Butler, 2007).

According to (Valdéz & Castellón, (2011), teacher development "for a changing society that will integrate, educate, and celebrate very diverse children is a major challenge" (p. 31). As teachers are growing professionally and validating their decisions, they need formats where honest explorations about their choices within a changing society can happen, so that they can thrive in their classroom and school settings. When teachers thrive and are validated, conditions for self- and student-advocacy can flourish. Teachers will have the confidence to identify and examine inequities.

According to Joseph and Evans (2018), critically conscious teachers challenge power relations and inequities of English-oriented systems and operate from a multilingual perspective that strategically and purposefully offers alternatives to mainstream paradigms to understand cultural pluralism as the norm. Critically conscious teachers advocate. They advocate for their own continued learning and for their students (Joseph & Evans, 2018). In order for progress to be made, critically conscious teachers must have the confidence to analyze their own biases and beliefs, develop a sociolinguistic conscience, learn research-based methodology useful in teaching multilingual students. This happens when they focus on the need to continually gain knowledge about language development and explore issues of social justice and equity. This finding suggests hybrid forms of collaboration offer a place for this to occur.

Hybrid Forms of Critical Collaboration. The teachers in this study describe the need to have space and time in their schedules to engage in professional collaboration. Hybrid forms of collaboration are innovative approaches that combine in-person and online professional collaboration, and these forms offer myriad options which alleviate some of the current barriers of time, space, and content. To sustain cultural and linguistic practices, space and time for learning that teachers need and want must be part of professional learning design. Amber, Brittany, and Caroline have been reaching out on their own to find webinars, online resources, and the informal advice of colleagues to quickly respond to the new realities of teaching. School and district leaders can learn from this and focus on teacher engagement by offering opportunities for teachers to share their voice and exercise choice. Offering optional but interesting and engaging professional learning in several different ways, both live and recorded, will not only attract, but inspire educators to learn and grow during an isolating time.

The sheer volume of resources can be overwhelming, and collaborating from home can create a new set of challenges (i.e., focusing on the task, in-home distractions). Professional learning leaders should curate resources, support educators in matching outcomes to learning goals, and provide guidance about how to focus the learning experience. Sharing the ways teachers adapted to and leveraged the online learning space to begin the work of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices would yield benefits across the profession. The rapid expansion of learning opportunities is a positive development that should continue beyond the pandemic.

To create a hybrid approach to critical collaboration, the *critical* aspect of collective work cannot be negotiated. A theoretical conception that addresses the critical aspect of professional collaboration is the critical professional development (CPD) framework (Kohli et al., 2015). This CPD framework is in response to traditional anti-dialogic approaches to teacher professional development (Freire, 1970). CPD anchors dialogue as central to collaborative efforts to focus on four dialogic actions—collaboration, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis. CPD offers educational systems a foundation from which to open the dialogue about critical online learning. Based on my findings, I suggest hybrid collaborative approaches attend to the sociocultural aspects of teaching and the dialogue needed to counter inequities and oppressive practices. "In both pedagogy and content, CPD develops teachers' critical consciousness by focusing their efforts towards liberatory teaching" (Kohli, 2015, p. 9).

Designing critical collaborative spaces that expand the knowledge base for mainstream teachers can create the conditions for professional learnings that increases critical consciousness.

The Teacher Habits of Culturally Sustaining Practice Model

        The Teacher Habits of Culturally Sustaining Practice Model was created to illustrate a plan of action based on the findings that emerged from the teachers' experiences. Figure 19 represents how the study moved to recommended actions teachers and districts can collaboratively implement. The model outlines implications for mainstream teachers and district leaders as they plan for and facilitate within culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments. On the left-hand side of the model, the concentric circles have been deliberately reconfigured to represent movement toward the actions described on the right-hand side of the model. The action-oriented next steps of the right side provide distinct and active recommendations for teachers and the educational systems within which they are working. These action-oriented recommendations include (a) moving beyond strategies and resources; (b) developing critically conscious online teachers; and (c) building teacher agency. Beneath each action-oriented recommendation, more specific teacher habits are named and described below.

Figure 19

Teacher Habits of Culturally Sustaining Practice Model

Study Findings

Action-Oriented Next Steps

Self-Selected Professional Growth Experiences

Sustaining Habits of Practice to Move Beyond Resources and Strategies

Moving Beyond Strategies and Resources
- Commit to the creation of safe dialogic spaces
- Reflection/introspection with a raciolinguistic lens
- Connect to wider sociopolitical factors outside school
- Examine language policy and historical accounts
- Establish culture and language goals in the curriculum
- Foster democratic student talk

Leveraged the Online Setting

Sustaining Habits of Practice to Develop Critically Conscious Online Teachers

Developing Critically Conscious Online Teachers
- Institute online practices as salient pedagogy
- Capture the online pedagogical gains
- Conceptualize hybrid professional learning models
- Sustain the *critical* in online methodology to center students
- Invest in online professional growth

Validation Of Decision-Making

Sustaining Habits of Practice to Plan for Teacher Agency

Building Teacher Agency
- Create a district-wide shared vision
- Recognize the dynamic quality of current times
- Plan for structures/mechanism of validation
- Examine hierarchies of decision-making
- Establish hybrid forms of critical collaboration

Moving Beyond Resources and Strategies

The first action-oriented step outlined on the right side of the Teacher Habits of CSP Model describes recommendations for teachers as they move beyond resources and strategies in their development of critical consciousness. Foundational to this recommendation is the importance of committing to safe dialogic spaces that provide a network of support and collaboration for teachers in their exploration of critical consciousness. Supporting mainstream teachers with the creation of dialogic spaces provides a forum for teachers to feel secure with the dis-ease of stepping out of their comfort zones. Significant growth in teachers can occur by recognizing that teachers are at varying stages of their critically conscious journeys and provides the structures necessary for their personal exploration of new knowledge and pedagogy (Joseph

& Evans, 2018). These dialogic spaces are encouraged and reinforced, rather than discouraged and criticized. In order to move beyond a focus on strategies and resources, teacher professional growth experiences must be re-envisioned to emphasize the experience, knowledge, and voice of teachers, especially in the case of all that has been learned within the conditions of the pandemic.

Once the commitment to the creation of dialogic spaces is made, an ethos is fostered that will open the door to the recommendations suggesting teachers create habits that connect their practices to the wider sociocultural factors outside of school. These factors greatly impact learning inside of school and should guide teachers in the examination of language policies and historical accounts of equity in education (Milner, 2012). These dialogic spaces will create the conditions to nurture teacher reflection and introspection through a raciolinguistic lens that values the funds of knowledge each student embodies (Moll & Gonzales, 1994) and allows teachers to confront their implicit biases in a supportive environment. As the model outlines, these discussions will lay groundwork for teachers to initiate the establishment of culture and language goals within the curriculum as part of this growth. When teachers shift to asset-based approaches such as the inclusion of culture and language goals, transformative practices such as democratic student talk will be fostered.

Developing Critically Conscious Online Teachers

The second action-oriented step outlined on the right side of the Teacher Habits of CSP Model describes recommendations for teachers as they incorporate critical consciousness in online settings. A necessary step forward for the implementation of this action step begins with the creation of a district plan that recognizes online practices as a salient pedagogy. Online pedagogy must be included in teacher professional growth opportunities as an acknowledged and stable practice that is essential for today's learning environments (Baran, et al., 2011). The

pandemic not only had a huge impact on student learning, but on teacher learning, and the pedagogical gains that are a result of this experience need to be captured. The pandemic brought many challenges to teachers, and the short- and long-term instructional discoveries should become the mainstay of critically conscious teacher practice. The experience of the shift to online, left many educators asking, W*hat worked that I should develop as part of my practice? What didn't work and should be discontinued?* This model suggests supportive districts can explore these questions through collaborative measures that involve teachers, families and students in the dialogue (Kohli et al., 2015). When online pedagogical gains are captured, hybrid learning models can be created as central spaces for teachers to explore and extend their knowledge, skills, and practice as they evolve into critically conscious practitioners. As presented in the discussion of Finding 2 above, the Teacher Habits of CSP Model illuminates the importance of deliberately sustaining the critical aspects regardless of the instructional platform (Code et al., 2020). Conceptualizing hybrid professional learning provides the needed teacher growth models that sustain the *critical* in online methodology as students are prioritized. The key to the sustainability of critically conscious teacher development is the commitment to prioritize the investment of teacher online professional growth within an educational system.

Building Teacher Agency

The third action-oriented step outlined on the right side of the Teacher Habits of CSP Model frame suggestions for building teacher agency. Building teacher agency begins with the creation of a district-wide shared vision, crafted through a collaboration that includes teachers and district leaders. The involvement of teachers and leaders as equal partners will lead to the unearthing of quality indicators that reflect the lived experiences of the educators. Effective collaboration requires the recognition of the dynamic quality of the current times and is a

consideration for flexibility needed while building teacher agency in ever-changing conditions in the wider world. This highlights the understanding that the conditions outside of school deeply impact the learning and growth within school (i.e., the pandemic; racial equity movement) (Milner, 2012). This flexibility within planned district structures provides teachers with the essential mechanisms to validate decision-making and facilitate a sense of security and self-confidence needed for authentic professional growth. Actively building agency among teachers requires the examination of hierarchies for decision-making. Teachers' understandings of systems of power and influence are critical for those seeking agency (Freire, 2005), so that they can self-advocate and in turn, advocate for students, families, communities. As teachers build agency through the establishment of hybrid forms of critical collaboration, transformative and sustainable practices will flourish.

Study Limitations

Several factors limited the design and implementation of this study. As a phenomenological study, the findings of this research describe a particular phenomenon in a specific context. Although particularities can be drawn out to inform other settings, the conclusions in this study are a result of the conditions surrounding culturally and linguistically responsive practices in first grade literacy instruction during mandated online teaching and learning. This section describes the limitations that existed in this endeavor.

Sample Size and Selection

When this study had to move to an online setting, unexpectedly and in unforeseen circumstances, the situation posed many new challenges. The circumstances caused feelings of disconnectedness in all areas of life, including school and the bond of the school community. The physical space of a learning community that usually takes place in a classroom is hard to

translate to an online environment with little advance notice or preparation. In addition, the replication of face-to-face, brick-and-mortar instruction in an online setting had a significant impact on almost every aspect of the experience. Teachers felt more apprehensive to participate in a study due to the uncertainty of how school would translate to a remote online setting and extra caution and care was needed to provide assurances. Examples of these extra precautions included using audio recording only, even when camera options were available, both during the interviews and classroom observations. During the teacher interview, the names of the participants were concealed to avoid future identification, and the camera features were turned off, so only the audio was recorded for transcription. Teachers were made aware of these protocols in advance and understood the methodology was intended to provide confidentiality of their involvement.

There are always cautions that must be considered when generalizing from smaller sample sizes used in qualitative research as they are not statistically representative and causality of findings were not investigated. Even without the circumstances of the pandemic, this qualitative phenomenological study was limited in sample size and had unique circumstances. Selecting schools with classrooms that have similar conditions based on criteria offered enough data to sufficiently describe the CSP phenomenon of interest. The research questions and findings of this study offer useful considerations for similar settings, under similar conditions.

Time Constraints

This study was in progress when the pandemic closed school districts and made face-to-face research impossible to conduct. As a result, new protocols had to be developed, submitted, and approved at every level of the study. Since remote work was in effect for almost every arena associated with study, the timeline of this project was severely delayed on multiple occasions.

After redesign, resubmission, and approval, a new version of the study was conducted on a more abbreviated timeline inclusive of the fully online setting. There were also challenges related to the structures of time that teachers had available for participating in something additional to the already congested workday that the pandemic exacerbated. Respecting the limited time that educators had to participate in this additional work is critical to note. External research is typically challenging in regular circumstances, and the COVID-19 global pandemic significantly affected daily life and schooling. It is acknowledged that the pandemic and shift to online learning made external research a low priority for teachers during this time.

Revised Schedules and Protocols

The move to online/remote learning caused many changes in school schedules both for students and staff. The configuration of daily times to provide synchronous and asynchronous learning for students changed significantly compared to previous in-person schedules. This was a major disruption in daily living for students, their families, and the teachers. Protocols related to instruction time or attendance greatly affected the access to a typical classroom setting. Additionally, considerations for observations in classrooms were much different from previous in-person protocols. The potential for more guarded behavior in the online setting was evident among teachers. Students had the choice (per district protocol) whether to have their microphone and camera on at any time during the instruction and these newly developed protocols were not always uniformly applied. At times, it was not possible to see students or hear them as one would in an in-person setting. Observations were scheduled well in advance, links were provided to me, and the announcement of a visitor (observer) to the classroom was presented in a very different fashion in an online setting. These heightened safeguards were in place for the protection of students and provided unique challenges in completing observations, causing a ripple effect in

authenticity that might not have occurred in an in-person setting. The need to continually revise meeting times and formats was a constant as teachers and students alike adjusted to newly designed schedules for online learning.

Unreliability of Technology

Technology during the transition to remote learning, which was fully online and online, caused disruption on a regular basis. Unreliability of connectivity, either due to hardware, software, or internet issues, were a regular occurrence. These disruptions caused a reduced attendance rate for students, so many classroom populations were significantly smaller than a typical in-person setting. Wireless or hardwire connectivity for online access varied from setting to setting, and instances of frozen screens, sound issues, or losing internet connectivity compromised the ability to fully interpret every interaction. At times, depending upon the type of online teaching experience, the quality of sound or video was affected. For example, if there were videos being projected to the class on a shared screen, there may be glitches or delays in transition which can complicate understanding. At times, technology was compromised because of many common factors and mentioning this as a limitation is an important note for this study.

Recommendations for Further Inquiry

The findings from this research present various areas of consideration for further inquiry which would contribute to the field of critically conscious teaching. A primary area for further examination is the intersection of critical consciousness and online pedagogy. The merging of these two approaches must be deliberate to ensure the strategic and encompassing complexity that pays special attention to the effective fusion of critical consciousness and online teaching. Future studies should be purposeful in the analysis of the ways to move beyond the replication of teaching and learning experiences that exist through in-person models that tend to emphasize

technical aspects of conversion to online platforms, which have not been captured in previous frameworks.

Related to the need for the effective union of pedagogies, further research that focuses on teacher-created professional growth models that build the *critical* mindset in teacher consciousness is a necessary and worthy endeavor. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address pedagogical practices that combine the analytical and reflective nature required to effectively combine these ways of teaching and learning. Research is needed to document ways districts can show a commitment to safe dialogic spaces that provide a network of support and collaboration for teachers in their exploration of critical consciousness. At the same time, the need to ensure that teachers are basing their learning in student-centered practices is at the heart of this growth. Literature that identifies online professional growth experiences that provide teachers with safety and security within the structures for critical reflection and build their confidence in these practices is limited and would add to this field of study.

Identification of the teacher role in the development of critically consciousness, simultaneously as learner and as a practitioner, is another area in need of more study. How can teachers play a pivotal role in the creation and implementation of these critical spaces as an institutional shared vision is created and implemented? The routes of development that invest and acknowledge the varying pathways for professional growth would offer school districts the designs for bringing teachers' voices into the process that encourage agency and empowerment. Defining the involvement of teachers and leaders as equal partners as they pursue critically conscious quality indicators that reflect teachers' lived experiences in changing times is a needed investigation. Based on these conclusions, educational research is needed that supports district

leaders in building systems that encourage teacher networking to reach beyond the in-school or district perspective. This would offer new insight to critically conscious teacher development. These studies would open additional channels for teacher growth that extend beyond many of the current options that provide narrow and limiting teacher education opportunities. Valuable further inquiry would also include how a focus on culturally and linguistically sustaining practices can inform district administration and leadership.

Final Reflections

Since 1974 when the first version of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) publication "Students' Right to Their Own Language" statement (1974; 1988: 1992; 2015) was published, the campaign for dismantling language power hierarchies, especially in educational systems where Dominant American English (DAE) has been the language of power, has been underway. Born out of the need for disruption of DAE power structures, culturally and linguistically sustaining frameworks offer passages into language for learning that is equitable and inclusive by embracing students' histories and authentic experiences as the norm for teaching and learning. These teacher behaviors and classroom instructional practices confirm the interrogation of an inequitable system based on language privilege. This study on mainstream first-grade literacy teacher contributes to the conversation needed to keep a pulse on language equity. A pulse on language equity is an integrative cognitive, social, and creative approach which recognizes multilingualism and respects children's human dignity and linguistic histories in service to their literacy learning.

By analyzing the teacher decision-making process and the extent to which first-grade mainstream teachers include culturally and linguistically sustaining practices during literacy instruction, this research has shown there is a need to move beyond strategies and resources to developing critically conscious online teachers, while building teacher agency. More evidence of

responsive and relevant practices is visible in mainstream literacy instruction when teachers explore and develop their knowledge and skills. Culturally and linguistically sustaining practice increases in literacy instruction as teacher awareness and knowledge rises and teachers dismantle language hierarchies. Teacher growth in self-awareness and reflection is thrives when exploration of their personal biases and beliefs occurs. This exploration maintains the importance of student language and identity as the core of teaching. During this never-ending process, teachers must be afforded grace and support as they move through this challenging and sensitive work. The safety and security in their continued development is a necessary and critical design element, if further advancement is to be realized.

It is to be expected that some teachers will be at the forefront of their critical consciousness, and the ways teachers balance literacy instruction with opportunities for the recognition of students' own language practices and languages is dynamic and will vary. Mainstream teacher practice is moving toward raising student's communicative potential and access to learning by legitimizing students' right to their own language at very critical points in their literacy development. Mainstream teachers continue to evolve in their navigation of student language rights while fully building linguistic opportunities, contributes to a critically conscious pedagogy.

As a final note, this study occurred while a multitude of unique and unprecedented events were unfolding locally, in the U.S. and the wider world. Recognizing that this context influenced the outcomes of this research is central, but also offers distinctive perspectives which can fuel deeper analysis. Teacher growth within a changing society, such as in the time of this study when an abrupt ending to in-person teaching and learning occurred, is a major challenge—especially when this halt to physical interaction intersected with the national racial reckoning of the Black

Lives Matter movement that illuminated the historic, social, political, economic racial inequities across the U.S. The magnitude of movements such as these, cannot be set apart from school issues and considerations.

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Email Scripts

To avoid undue influence during recruitment, the PI will not approach or solicit participation directly. All recruitment solicitations will be communicated through a teacher leader who is not associated with the study. The teacher leader will provide information about the study using the recruitment Email Scripts guidance. The emails will be sent to the PI for screening.

Recruiting:

Dear Colleague,

Greetings! My name is [teacher leader] and I am sending an invitation to you on behalf of Debbie Kuether. Debbie Kuether is a doctoral student at UW–Milwaukee in the Urban Education Doctoral Program. She is conducting research on the ways first-grade teachers leverage language during literacy instruction. She would like to invite you to participate because you are a first-grade teacher who teaches literacy in a language-diverse setting.

Participation in this research includes one 45-minute interview, two 90-minute classroom observations, review of two lesson plans, and a debrief. If you participate in the interviews, observations, and debrief, your total time commitment will be approximately 4.5 hours. This time will be scheduled at your convenience and would occur over several months. To show appreciation for your participation in the full study, you will receive a $25.00 Target gift card. This token of appreciation is in alignment with district policy related to compensation for study participation.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, Debbie Kuether can be reached at 414-475-8327 or kruegedn@milwaukee.12.wi.us.

The principal investigator will review candidates to verify eligibility, and the teacher leader will notify candidates of their acceptance or denial into the study. All aspects of the study will be

described, and the principal investigator will be available to respond via email to any questions that may arise.

The principal investigator will obtain consent using the *Consent Form*.

Original recruiting email string will be included for reference.

Screening/Obtaining Consent:

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your interest and willingness to participate in this important study focusing on the ways first-grade teachers leverage language during literacy instruction. I am excited to inform you that you have met eligibility requirements, and I am excited to have you be a part of this exciting work.

Please review the attached Consent Form, which fully explains the specifics of participation in the study. If you have further questions or would like to discuss participation in the study further, please email or call Debbie Kuether at 414-475-8327 or kruegedn@milwaukee.12.wi.us.

Upon reviewing and signing the Consent Form, please email Debbie Kuether at 414-475-8327 or kruegedn@milwaukee.12.wi.us. Thank you again for your participation.

Informed Consent

Study Title	The Impact of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices on Teacher Decision Making
Researcher	Deborah Kuether/Doctoral Candidate in Urban Education Doctoral Program
Principal Investigator	Donna Pasternak/University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Professor, English Education

We are inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the knowledge and pedagogical practices that first-grade mainstream teachers utilize to inform their literacy practices when providing instruction in English as a second language (ESL) designated classrooms. I would like to understand what teachers know about language acquisition, how they connect that knowledge to their pedagogy, and the level of classroom implementation.

What will I do?

Interview (45 minutes)
- Ask four open-ended questions related to the planning and instruction in your classroom. Some of these questions may have a follow-up question.
- Note-take and audio record your responses.

Two Classroom Observations during Literacy Instruction (90 minutes)
- Arrange two 90-minute observations during literacy instruction.
- Use the Look-Fors document to record data about the classroom environment and instruction.

Artifact Analysis
- Collect the literacy lesson plans for the two 90-minute literacy observations.

Debrief (30 minutes)
- Allow for final discussion and questions prior to completing the study.

Risks:

Possible risks	How we are minimizing these risks
Undue influence for participation	Recruitment is not conducted by the Student Principal Investigator (SPI) and will be conducted by a non-administrator/teacher leader. Information will not be used for any purpose outside the purposes of this study, including job performance evaluation. Procedures and protocols will be discussed in detail in advance to ensure that participants understand, agree, and feel confident regarding their participation in the study. Communication will be ongoing throughout the study, and you may ask for clarification at any time regarding any procedures. Transparency related to the incentive for participation is discussed and documented in advance.
Breach of confidentiality (your data being seen by someone who should not have access to it)	• All identifying information is removed and replaced with a study ID. • I'll remove all identifiers after the completion of the study. • I'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer. • I'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. • I will keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we will be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data. • The written research will not present any identifying characteristics.
Use of data for evaluation of job performance	All information is anonymous though the use of pseudonyms and will not be identifiable. All information will be kept secure and will be used only for the purposes of the research. The data will not be discussed or referenced at any time and will be accessible and visible only by me. All information will be destroyed after the analysis is completed. No references will be made to the study at any time, including during school or classroom visits.

There may be risks we do not know about yet. Throughout the study, I will tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

Other Study Information:

Possible benefits	Anticipated benefits for a specific group of individuals, teachers, includes gathering insight on approaches teachers use to leverage student language assets to improve literacy instruction.
Estimated number of participants	4
How long will it take?	Participation in this research includes one 45-minute interview, two 90-minute classroom observations, review of two lesson plans (by the SPI), and a debrief.
Costs	None
Compensation	$25.00 Target gift card Due to UWM policy and IRS regulations, we may have to collect your name, address, Social Security/tax ID number, and signature to give you this compensation.
Future research	Your data will not be used or shared for any future research studies.
Recordings	I will audio record the interview. The audio recordings will be used to create transcripts of the interview so that content analysis can occur. The audio recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

Confidentiality and Data Security:
I will collect the following identifying information for the research: your name, school, and email address. This information is necessary to create a coding.

Where will data be stored?	On my computer
How long will it be kept?	Three years after the completion of the study 12/31/2023

Who can see my data?	Why?	Type of data
The researchers	To conduct the study and analyze the data	Coded (names removed and labeled with a study ID)
The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at UWM The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) or other federal agencies	To ensure that we are following laws and ethical guidelines	Coded (names removed and labeled with a study ID)

Anyone (public)	Our funding agency requires us to make our data set public so that other researchers can use it.	• Coded (names removed and labeled with a study ID) • If I quote you, we will use a pseudonym (fake name)

Mandated Reporting:
I am a mandated reporter. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, we are required to report this to the authorities.

Conflict of Interest:
None

Contact Information:

For questions about the research	Deborah Kuether	414-333-5425 kuetherd@uwm.edu
	Donna Pasternak, Ph.D. Professor of English Education University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee	414-229-4592 dlp2@uwm.edu
For questions about your rights as a research participant	IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)	414-229-3173 irbinfo@uwm.edu
For complaints or problems	Deborah Kuether	414-333-5425 kuetherd@uwm.edu
	IRB	414-229-3173 irbinfo@uwm.edu

Signatures:
If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

_____

Name of Participant (print)

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

[Use if the researcher will obtain informed consent in person.]

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

Teacher Interview

The following questions are being proposed to be used during the teacher interview. The teacher interview will be virtual through a secure digital platform at the time and discretion of the interviewee. Special care to ensure privacy and comfort for the discussion will be considered. Interviews will be conducted one-on-one. A total of four teachers will be interviewed individually (to ensure "drop out" coverage). For their participation in the study, teachers will receive a $25.00 gift card upon completion of the interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. Interviews will be audio recorded for future analysis. Cameras will be disabled, and names will be altered pre-recording as to not be projected on the screen, and the projection will de-identify the participant. Participants will be renamed before recording begins as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4 (if needed). Expected time allotment for the entire first interview, from start to finish, will not exceed 45 minutes.

Teacher selection for this interview will be very intentional in that they will be pre-selected based on the following criteria:

- Milwaukee Public Schools—Milwaukee Public Schools will be the district setting because it is the largest urban setting in the state of Wisconsin. The students represent a very language-diverse population that is necessary for the study.
- Designated English as a second language (ESL) school—The ESL designation offers a setting where language programming is provided based on an identified need.
- First–grade teacher of record—First-grade classrooms offer an opportunity to analyze developmental literacy instruction at the foundational levels—a key aspect of the type of research being conducted.
- Mainstream teacher (general education teacher responsible for teaching grade-level content)—Teachers designated as mainstream are being studied to determine the teacher's ability to apply an equity approach to leveraging language, including English language variance, to develop grade-level literacy skills. The mainstream teacher provides the majority of instruction throughout the course of the school day and understands the knowledge and pedagogical practices that first-grade mainstream teachers utilize to inform their literacy practices when providing instruction in ESL– designated classrooms in the purpose of the study.
- At least 25% of students in classroom qualify to receive ESL support—Diverse student language needs are necessary to conduct the research. Classrooms with at least 25% of students designated to qualify for ESL support will provide a rich sample.
- Two or more years of teaching experience—Due to the complexity of teaching, first-year teachers will not be included in the study. Teachers with two or more years of teaching will alleviate stress factors that first-year teachers experience.
- Recommended for participation by district teacher leader—Recommendations by district teacher leaders will be considered. Recommenders will consider the teacher workload, availability, and disposition for participation.

- Approval of school administration for participation—The school administrator will approve participation to ensure that there are no conflicts or implications related to participation.

Interview Protocol:

After a welcome and greetings, the SPI will begin by saying, "Thank you once again for your willingness to participate in this important research. I am excited to hear your ideas and want to ensure that I am capturing everything accurately. To do so, we will use an audio recorder, which you see here, and I will also take written notes as we proceed. The audio recording is accessible only to me, and the access is protected. I want to ensure that you feel confident that the interview will not be shared with anyone, in any form, and that it is for the sole purpose of accurate transcripts for this doctoral research. This discussion will not take longer than 45 minutes, and I will be very aware of time as to honor your schedule. Before I begin recording, please disable your camera and rename yourself as Participant 1. Do you have any questions before we begin?" Questions will be addressed as applicable.

Interview Questions:

1. What experiences have encouraged you to become open and aware of the need to include specific strategies/teaching techniques that address the linguistic needs of your students?

2. Describe the professional development/training you have had that focuses on language and/or language acquisition.
   a. How has it affected your practice?
   b. Is there anything that you wish you had more of?
   c. Do you feel confident of your knowledge in this area?

3. How do you integrate language in your lesson plans when you are preparing literacy instruction?
   a. What steps do you take?
   b. What resources are helpful?

4. What language techniques or strategies do you use during literacy instruction?
   a. In what ways do you build on language differences in your instruction?
   b. How do you monitor language use in your classroom?
   c. How do you provide feedback to students?

5. How do collaborate with ESL teachers or other teachers to ensure linguistic justice in your classroom?

Closing: Thank you for your time. Your willingness to share your ideas and experiences is greatly appreciated and valued.

FOR NOTE-TAKING PURPOSES

Interview Questions:
1. What experiences have encouraged you to become open and aware of the need to include specific strategies/teaching techniques that address the linguistic needs of your students?

2. Describe the professional development/training you have had that focuses on language and/or language acquisition.
   a. How has it affected your practice?
   b. Is there anything that you wish you had more of?
   c. Do you feel confident of your knowledge in this area?

3. How do you integrate language in your lesson plans when you are preparing literacy instruction?
   a. What steps do you take?
   b. What resources are helpful?

4. What language techniques or strategies do you use during literacy instruction?
   a. In what ways do you build on language differences in your instruction?
   b. How do you monitor language use in your classroom?
   c. How do you provide feedback to students?

5. How do collaborate with ESL teachers or other teachers to ensure linguistic justice in your classroom?

APPENDIX D:

Classroom Environment–Language Observation Tool

Date:
Time:

What Do I See?	Reflections/Thoughts

CURRICULUM VITAE

CERTIFICATION AND EDUCATION WI DPI License #K626000134182

- **Doctoral Candidate in Urban Education,** University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, expected completion date, December 2020 (4.0 GPA)
- **Master of Educational Leadership (Director of Instruction–5010),** University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2016 (4.0 GPA)
- **Master of Education in Reading—Reading Teacher License (1316),** Concordia University, June 2013; graduated with honors (4.0 GPA)
- **Elementary Education Grades 1–6 (42) English (1300)**
- **National Board-Certified Teacher/Master Educator Early Childhood Generalist (50),** Certificate #641211630 since 2004; renewed in 2014
- **Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction,** National-Louis University, June 1999; graduated with honors
- **Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (1–6),** Minor: English language and literature, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1994; graduated cum laude
- **40+ Additional credits with emphasis on technology and literacy,** Marquette University, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Concordia, McPherson College (transcripts available)

EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION

Manager of K–12 Literacy, *Milwaukee Public Schools*	2013–present
K–12 Rdg Curriculum Specialist, *Milwaukee Public Schools*	2012–2013
K–12 Rdg Curriculum Specialist–Underfill, *Milwaukee Public Schools*	2012
District Literacy Specialist, *Milwaukee Public Schools*	2006–2012
Adjunct Faculty, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*	2007–2010
Adjunct Faculty, *Cardinal Stritch University*	2002–2006
Literacy Coach K–5, *Byron Kilbourn School*	2002–2006
Third-Grade Teacher, *Byron Kilbourn School*	1995–2002
Special Needs Health Care Provider, *Families–Communities Together*	1994–2005

URBAN TEACHER MENTOR

- Provided support for MPS candidates pursuing National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification and Take One! candidates. Completed mentor training through national boards in 2003 and renewed in 2013.
- Cadre leader of an online room in *The Learning Community/Moodle* that offers support to new teachers in our district. Responsibilities include monthly posts, emails, synchronous and asynchronous discussions, and organizing face-to-face collaboration sessions.

NOTABLE SPECIALIZED TRAINING

- Pear Deck certified coach (fall 2020)
- Google certified Educator 1 (fall 2020)
- UnBoundEd Standards Institute Phase 1 ELA pathway

- ➢ Beyond Diversity equity training through the Courageous Conversations about Race Institute (2018–19)
- ➢ Equity and social justice training (fall 2018)
- ➢ Systems training through The Waters Foundation
- ➢ Teachscape Educator Effectiveness certified evaluator (2015, renewed 2017)
- ➢ Wisconsin DPI certified professional development plan reviewer (since January 2006)
- ➢ Certified Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) trainer and data collector
- ➢ Project CRISS trainer
- ➢ Train the trainer of Concept-Based Curriculum (summer 2015)
- ➢ Fidelity of Implementation (FoI) trained
- ➢ DIBELS Next and MyACCESS trainer of trainers (ToT)
- ➢ Response to Intervention RtI trainer (behavior and academics)
- ➢ Trained in a variety of online educational resources and data management systems such as Google Suite, Newsela, Smarty Ants, Achieve3000, Reading A-Z, RAZ-Kids, Science A-Z, Vocabulary A-Z, Defined Learning, netTrekker, Discovery Education, and many others
- ➢ English Language Arts Committee Member for the Teachers for a New Era Project in conjunction with UWM and the Carnegie Foundation, school assessment coordinator, P5 coordinator, learning team member, volunteer coordinator

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- ➢ **Seasons of Caring Student Mobilization Award,** United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha (fall 2018)
- ➢ **Excellence in Customer Service Award,** March 2016, presented by Superintendent Darienne Driver, Ed.D.
- ➢ **Chancellor's Graduate Student Award,** Received award through UW–Milwaukee to support continued graduate work with an emphasis on research and data (fall 2015, fall 2016)
- ➢ **Milwaukee Board of School Directors,** Received recognition for continuous improvement efforts to promote increased student achievement through National Board of Professional Teaching certification process (January 2004)
- ➢ **Metro Milwaukee Alliance for Black School Educators (MMABSE),** Teacher of the Year (2006)
- ➢ **Admiral Hayward Excellence in Education Award** (2011, monetary award received)
- ➢ **Wisconsin State Reading Association, WSRA** current member
- ➢ **International Reading Association, IRA** current member
- ➢ **Metro Milwaukee Alliance for Black School Educators (MMABSE)** current member

SELECTED SKILLS AND MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Policy Development
- Co-authored MPS Board Administrative Policy 1.05 Equity in MPS
- Collaborated on development of MPS Administrative Policies 7.33: Grading Systems; 7.34: Final Evidence of Proficiency; 7.36: Promotion and Retention of Students; and 8.06: Ethnic-Focus Schools

Curriculum Development
- ASCD trained in curriculum writing using Understanding by Design
- Concept-Based Curriculum and instruction trainer through the Dr. Lynne Erickson Institute
- Developed Urban Teacher Induction Program language arts content for Wisconsin teacher licensing
- Provided content for 25+ on-demand learning courses in the MPS Learning Management System
- Wrote content and lesson plans for Reading A-Z best-selling online reading resource website
- Developed innovative literacy curriculum including a social and emotional (SEL) component and assessments aligned to district CCSS, including district pacing guides and assessment resources
- Spearheaded a comprehensive technology program infused with literacy; facilitated several professional development opportunities for colleagues to integrate technology with literacy (Enhancing Education through Technology lead school co-coordinator)
- Created and provided professional learning for Milwaukee Public Schools' Summer Academy and Extended Learning Opportunities programs
- Collaborated on the curriculum content of several district-wide initiatives, including Differentiation, Rigor, and Relevance; High-Quality Instruction; Literature Circles; Writing Circles; Inquiry Circles; Building Background Knowledge; Academic Vocabulary; Educational Plans; Administrator's Leadership Conference; literacy coach professional development; and customized school curriculum needs
- Created content for several online courses and/or modules available through *The Learning Community/Moodle* and facilitated professional learning
- Collaborated with colleagues and parents to design and implement the school's School Improvement Plan
- Ongoing data analysis (formative and summative) with colleagues to develop and monitor high-quality implementation of best practices
- Trained school staff on Curriculum Design Assistant and have authored and submitted lessons for district use

Literacy Initiatives
- Collaborated with Greater Milwaukee Foundation and local community partners to establish 3,000 community volunteers in Milwaukee Public Schools to assist with reading growth
- Developed Transformative Reading Instruction (TRI) with Milwaukee Succeeds and secured private funds to provide reading coaches in 15 Milwaukee schools (public and private); program is starting Year 5 and has three years of formal evaluation proving significant gains
- Led a diverse team that developed and provided monthly professional development opportunities to principals, assistant principals, district staff, district literacy coaches, and instructional coaches—literacy on best practices in teaching and learning

- ➢ Awarded 1.1-million-dollar grant through the Department of Education to build knowledge and capacity of elementary teachers in foundational reading instruction
- ➢ Developed and secured four-year ongoing partnership with Milwaukee Succeeds for Transformative Reading Instruction (TRI) valued at over three million dollars; model informed district structures
- ➢ Secured partnership with Bernie's Book Drive to provide personal libraries to 60 MPS schools for life of program
- ➢ Collaborated on the TEAL–*Teacher Effectiveness for All Learners* and SoR–*School of Recognition* literacy grants
- ➢ Worked with the Next Door Foundation to provide books to Kilbourn families through tutoring and incentive programs on a weekly basis
- ➢ Identified need and secured computer-aided instruction in literacy and math for special needs students
- ➢ Established partnerships with many community establishments (Wisconsin Hospitality Group, Six Flags, Noah's Ark, Rocky Rococo, Jewish Federation, Helen Bader, Lexmark, and other local businesses) to promote literacy initiatives at Kilbourn School
- ➢ Authored and was awarded numerous competitive grants that support literacy, technology, and math initiatives at Kilbourn such as Homework First, Herzfeld Foundation, Math Mini Grants, and Enhancing Education through Technology; also was awarded $10,000 through Book It Reading Program—total grant monies awarded over a three-year period exceed $125,000

Facilitator of Professional Learning
- ➢ Developed content and presented at numerous state and national conferences such as WSRA, IRA, Council of the Great City Schools (listing available upon request)
- ➢ Provided district training to administrators, support staff, and teachers on K–12 literacy
- ➢ Developed and provided virtual content and support on Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) to teachers throughout the country through Instruction Partners
- ➢ Facilitate several online TLC/Moodle courses for undergraduate, graduate, and Professional Development Assistant (PDA) credit
- ➢ Adjunct faculty member of Cardinal Stritch University's College of Education Outreach program providing online professional development through MPS initiative to teachers in our district; have facilitated eight graduate-level literacy courses
- ➢ Adjunct faculty member of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee's urban educator's seminars for preservice teachers (MCA Block 2)
- ➢ Facilitator of online collaboration using the technology tool *Elluminate!* and GotoMeeting
- ➢ Facilitator at many statewide and district conferences on literacy content (specific titles available on request)
- ➢ Developer and facilitator of National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Candidate Support sessions
- ➢ Adjunct faculty member of the Sally Ride Academy developing and facilitating courses on the National Board process for teachers
- ➢ Provided ongoing embedded professional development on literacy at Kilbourn School
- ➢ Facilitator/developer of several online teacher collaboration environments—Literacy Coach CoLab, VIP Elementary, and MyACCESS

Current Strategic Community Partnerships
- ➢ Co-organizer of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Speech, Writing, and Art City-wide Contest with Wisconsin GE and Marcus Performing Arts Center
- ➢ Council member Mpact Council, developer and implementer of Reading Residencies, and Scriptworks with the Milwaukee Rep
- ➢ Designed professional development and participated in virtual reading tutoring with students at three MPS schools using Vello software in partnership with United Way
- ➢ Collaborator, trainer, and support person for City Year programming
- ➢ Coordination of the Campaign of Giving, Student Mobilization with United Way
- ➢ Developer and implementation support for Transformative Reading Instruction (TRI) with Milwaukee Succeeds
- ➢ Collaborator, support, and trainer in partnership with Wisconsin Reading Corps
- ➢ M^3 (M-Cubed) extended and alternative pathways to learning with MATC and UW–Milwaukee
- ➢ Bernie's Books, acquisition of books for student personal libraries
- ➢ Cross trainer and use of shared resources with the Milwaukee Public Library
- ➢ Coordinator and training support of My Very Own Library with United Way
- ➢ Developer and facilitator of content for in-service teachers through Instruction Partners (formerly District to District) for national open resources libraries
- ➢ Ongoing trainer for community tutors through Unison (formerly Interfaith)
- ➢ Ongoing collaborator and content developer with SHARP Literacy Program
- ➢ Ongoing collaborator and content developer with SPARK Literacy Program in partnership with the Milwaukee Boys' and Girls' Club of Greater Milwaukee