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Building Inclusive Environments for Emergent Multilingual Learners

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Building Inclusive Environments that Support Access and Success for Emergent Multilingual Learners

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The spring 2022 issue of *GATESOL Journal* provides language teachers, administrators, community developers, curriculum designers, and advocates of the emergent multilingual population in Georgia, the U.S., and around the world with insights on developing inclusive practices. *Inclusion* is "the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people" (YW Boston Blog, 2019, para. 8). This issue will showcase how inclusive practices can be supported *in* language, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices, and peace-oriented education.

Teacher Educators, International Students, Immigrant/Refugees and Inclusion
Classroom observation for both supervisory and non-supervisory purposes is a fact of life in second language and foreign language teaching. In fact, a widely accepted teacher development practice is for classroom teachers to be observed by more experienced teachers who are expected to provide helpful feedback on relevant qualities of classroom instruction. Unfortunately, few programs prepare language teachers or teacher educators to serve as either feedback providers (e.g., supervisors, supportive peers) or as feedback receivers (e.g., teachers). This issue opens with the multilingual researcher, Tuğba Nur Doğan Faitour, and her empirical study about herself and her experiences. She examines her role as an emergent bilingual speaker of English who provides peer support to her colleague abroad who also identifies as an emergent bilingual. Doğan Faitour takes a mixed-methods approach and examines the quantity and quality of English mitigation devices used to discern the effectiveness of her feedback to create a safe, non-threatening, and inclusive context for the purposes of increasing teacher awareness.

How to build an inclusive and safe space for multilingual learners is a theme Ji Ma also addresses in her literature review, which examines the challenges and strategies facing international students and faculty in the U.S. higher education system. Ma's literature review utilizes one book and 37 journal articles and aims to challenge "the normativity of the value of international education and international students by examining CLR [culturally linguistically responsive] practices" (p. 32) to support international students. Her paper uncovers the deep complexity of the varying relationships among international students, faculty, staff, and domestic students. Ma proposes five instructional strategies, five classroom environment practices, and two

student services that universities in the U.S. can implement which could alleviate challenges that international students face. With the efforts from faculty, staff, scholars, and students from multiple cultures, Ma emphasizes that "we can build linguistic and culturally diverse spaces in academia that could benefit all" (p. 32).

Also interested in building inclusive learning environments that support access and success for multilingual learners is Guptill, who discusses his original instructional design for adult immigrant and refugee populations. His curriculum design employs Critical Pedagogy and a Language for Peace Approach, which aims to support language educators to teach English language skills and nourish and sustain students' agency and empathy in localized civic engagements. His paper walks us through the process of answering the following inquiry: How can students, teachers, and community members work co-intentionally and collaboratively to create and sustain a civically engaged community? Guptill provides readers with possible needs assessments, suggested activities for peace-oriented service-learning, and will provide you with ideas for incorporating civic engagement into your classrooms.

Inclusive and Engaging Pedagogical Practices for Language Teaching and Learning Spaces
The final three articles of this issue address best practices for engaging emergent bilingual students in learning. Reyes, Leckie, and Stevenson use the term *emergent bilingual,* and not *English learner*, to strive for inclusivity because they argue that *emergent bilingual* emphasizes students' linguistic assets (not deficiencies) and what these students bring to the teaching/learning space in schools. (*GATESOL Journal* recognizes the importance of this terminology and will strive to use it henceforth in all its editorials and promote it with authors who submit papers.) Reyes, Leckie, and Stevenson emphasize the imperativeness for language educators to make "language and concepts visual and visible" (p. 52) in the learning environment because imagery can leverage access to content concepts and facilitate academic language development. They have identified several strategies and structures that are recognized to support students' language and literacy development among emergent bilinguals, such as using anchor charts, interactive vocabulary walls with pictures, and sentence frames. Reyes et al. draw our attention to the importance of enhancing family-school partnerships and connections among culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.

Mobley and Ramsay-Jordan's paper builds upon best practices for emergent bilingual students and transitions our understanding of the teaching environment to include virtual classrooms and spaces for learning. The article has us examine our own pedagogical practices and calls us to review the importance of providing meaningful interactions, understanding the power of student motivation, placing importance on vocabulary instruction, learning about the partnership model, and using graphic organizers. Mobley and Ramsay-Jordan's paper is a response to the current teaching and learning climate and is meant to support educators to produce creative ways to utilize virtual spaces for reading development and inclusivity.

The final paper by Kristensen addresses the best practices for engaging young emergent bilinguals and explains clearly and succinctly the teaching techniques of reader's theatre and role-play. Kristensen summarizes how readers' theatre was successfully implemented in a kindergarten classroom in Atlanta, Georgia, and outlines the procedure in a nine-step process. The guidelines shared in this Teaching Technique piece can support emergent bilinguals to engage in meaningful learning experiences while also increasing their language skills.

Finally, I (David) would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my colleague, Dr. Robert Griffin. The *GATESOL Journal's* growth is due to his endurance and willingness to dedicate valuable time, energy, and resources to provide our readership with substantial and quality articles. His vision and persistence is going to be missed but we at *GATESOL Journal* look forward to reading his scholarship and seeing how it blossoms and influences the academic fields that he is a part of. Thank you for all you have done Dr. Griffin. Huzzah.

Reference

YW Boston Blog. (2019, March 26). *Beyond the DE&I acronym: What are diversity, equity, and inclusion?* https://www.ywboston.org/2019/03/beyond-the-acronym-dei/

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Learning How to Use Mitigation Devices: A Peer-Supervisory Context Between a Non-Native Peer-Supervisor and a Non-Native English Teacher

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Abstract
Learning how to provide effective supervision can be challenging. After all, helping language teachers increase awareness regarding their teaching practices requires the difficult task of giving them critical feedback, which, at times, can be a face-threatening act as will be defined later in the paper. To soften their criticism, supervisors make use of various language strategies. However, the task of delivering feedback using such language strategies in English can be even more difficult for supervisors who are also second language learners of English. Utilizing the mitigation devices Wajnryb (1994) conceptualized, this study analyzed the language used in three post-observation conferences in a peer-supervisory discourse between a non-native English teacher and a non-native peer-supervisor. The study found that mitigation devices as conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994) were effective in structuring a non-threatening and growth-oriented supervisory context when consciously used by the non-native peer-supervisor.

Keywords
language teacher supervision, mitigation devices, non-native language teacher supervisor, peer-supervision

Introduction

In the field of language teacher supervision, one of the most significant elements is the post-observation conference where the supervisor delivers critical feedback gained from classroom observation to the teacher. Wajnryb (1995) states that the post-observation conference is an indispensable part of supervision since it creates a context for the improvement of teaching practices. The concept of post-observation conference is based on the idea that "teachers can improve by gaining feedback" (Bailey, 2006, p. 141). The underlying assumption for the feedback is that teachers can only make the necessary changes in their instruction if they are aware of its effectiveness.

Freeman (1989) defines awareness as the "capacity to recognize and monitor the attention one is giving or has given to something. Thus, one acts on or responds to the aspects of a situation of which one is aware" (p. 33). The importance of language teacher supervision lies in the fact that much of what is going on in a teacher's classroom may be unknown to them as teaching is dynamic and being aware of everything in a lesson might be a challenge for the teachers. Therefore, it is the supervisors who help teachers become aware by providing information gained from classroom observation (Bailey, 2006).

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Nevertheless, delivering such critical information can be a challenging task for the supervisors. The very nature of the post- observation conference entails the discussion between what is and what should be, which in return might create a tension between the supervisor and the teacher. Therefore, it is important to set a positive tone in the post-observation conference. However, the task of delivering feedback in English while maintaining a non-threatening tone can be even more difficult for supervisors who are also second language learners of English. The concept of "non-threatening" is vital, which places the topic of language at the core of this study's discussion.

The current study is the result of a peer-supervision process between a non-native English teacher and a non-native peer-supervisor who did not have experience in supervision prior to the study. The concept of peer-supervision is important since it allows for a supervisory context that is beneficial for both the teacher and the peer-supervisor. Alfonso (1977) stated that peer-supervision context could be a very important source for "relatively non-threatening" assistance for the teacher (p. 600). Moreover, it also provides the opportunity for the peer-supervisor to practice supervisory language. Despite the fact that the peer-supervisor is a proficient speaker of English as a foreign language, she was not familiar with the supervisory language to conduct post-observation conferences in English. For this reason, the mitigation devices conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994) were deliberately utilized to structure the language used to deliver critical feedback in the post-observation conferences between the non-native English teacher and non-native peer-supervisor by scripting them prior to the post-observation conferences. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What mitigation devices were scripted prior to the post-observation conferences (POCs)?
2. How were the scripted mitigation devices actually used during the post-observation conferences (POCs) and what was the response of the teacher?
3. How did the teacher comment on the language used during the post-observation conferences in her post-POC journal?

By answering these questions, the study investigates the language used and to what extent it was effective in creating a non-threatening and growth-oriented supervisory context with the aim of increasing teacher awareness regarding teaching practices.

Literature Review

Language in the Post-Observation Conference
Research shows that in order to create an empathetic relationship to help the teachers alter their teaching behaviors, supervisors employ certain language strategies that allow them to have technical proficiency during the post-observation conferences (Holland, 1989). Thus, language plays a fundamental part in the post-observation conference and the delivering of feedback. Wajnryb (1994) carried out one of the most comprehensive analyses of language used in post-observation conferences and found out that oftentimes, supervisors mitigate their language while delivering face-threatening acts (Bailey, 2009). Wajnryb (1994) defines mitigation as "the attempt by the speakers to hedge or undercut the full illocutionary force of their own assertions" (p. 201). She found that supervisors make use of mitigation to deliberately soften their message, partly to reduce the effects of the face-threatening act their message carries.

According to Wajnryb (1994), face is "the public, socially valued image of self which participants in an encounter claim for themselves and each other" (p. i). Face-threatening act, on

the other hand, is "a communicative act which runs contrary to the face needs of speaker or hearer" (Wajnryb, 1994, p. i). Face-threatening acts have also been defined as utterances "that represent a threat to another individual's expectations regarding self-image" (Erozan & Shibliyev, 2007, p. 125). Thus, teacher supervision can be a face-threatening act in that it requires supervisors to communicate things to the teachers that they might otherwise not want to hear. To keep away from loss of face, Waite (1992) found that supervisors mostly reduce the weight of their criticisms. To do this, supervisors can choose to mitigate their language while delivering feedback.

Mitigation Devices as Conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994)

Conducting one of the most elaborative research of supervisory language, Wajnryb (1994) concluded supervisors make use of "a high degree of mitigation to ease them through unenviable tasks" (Wajnryb, 1998, p. 531). This necessity for mitigation results from the emergence of "conflict of interests" between what the message demands and the need to protect the face of the addressee (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 202). Wajnryb identified three fundamental types of mitigation supervisors resort to while delivering critical feedback: hypermitigation, hypomitigation, and above-the-utterance-level mitigation. *Hypermitigation* means there is too much mitigation that the message is so softened to a point that it is not clear anymore. *Hypomitigation,* on the other hand, means that there is too little mitigation that the message is too direct and most likely threatens the *face* (Bailey, 2006). Therefore, hypermitigation and hypomitigation are at the two ends of the spectrum. While it is the clarity of the message that is threatened in hypermitigation, in hypomitigation, the danger lies not in the reception of the message. That is, when the message is too direct, teachers may get defensive, and they may assume a passive or an adversarial role which would then risk the message to be absorbed by the teacher (Bailey, 2006). It is challenging for the supervisors to set the balance between hypermitigation and hypomitigation, and to deliver the critical feedback in a way that the message is clear but also not threatening. The third type of mitigation Wajnryb discusses, *above-the-utterance-level mitigation,* refers to this balance and awareness of language, which means that softened criticism is achieved.

It is evident in Wajnryb's study that supervisors achieve above-the-utterance-level mitigation by using various linguistic means, which are categorized as semantic and syntactic devices. Wajnryb (1994) argues that they are all strategic since they all work to reduce the effects of face-threatening acts. Below, there will be a more detailed explanation of each device.

Semantic Devices

Semantic devices refer to mitigation strategies that are fulfilled with words as signals of meaning (Wajnryb, 1994). They include qualm indicators, asides, lexical hedges, and hedging modifiers. To start with, qualm indicators are linguistic signals that demonstrate uneasiness and reticence by the speaker. They are used to show the speaker's hesitation which then makes the message less certain and more ambiguous. They are a combination of aural and linguistic signals, and they are most likely to be fragments of utterances instead of whole utterances (Wajnryb, 1994). Some examples of qualm indicators are "um," "well," and "you know" (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 269).

Lexical hedges are meaning of words supervisors choose over another to reduce the criticism and soften the impact of the message. Wajnryb (1994) argues that it is not possible to identify the words over which they are chosen since they are absent but asserts that it is sufficient to suggest possibilities and identify the strategy as avoidance of certain words. Lexical hedges are preferred as an alternative for the more congruent option of a word in order to mitigate the harshness of the message. By utilizing lexical hedges, supervisors can assume a shared ground in

which only the teacher can understand the meaning of the word choice since it is only accessible to the ones who the information is shared with (Morallo, 2019). Moreover, when hedges are used as a linguistic device, they can point to a lack of full commitment by the speaker to the message they wish to convey (Fraser, 2010). Finally, lexical hedges are used to avoid technical language to reduce the professional distance between the speakers, as supervisors being seen as the expert. In this case, supervisors deliberately use style-shifted lexemes to show solidarity with the teachers.

Asides are defined by Wajnryb (1994) as short utterances that come with criticisms and they differ from qualm indicators in that they are "complete units, not fragments" (p. 272). Their meaning in context is closely related to the criticism that accompany them. Lastly, hedging modifiers can be in the word, phrase or clause form which can consist of a word (e.g., "just"), a phrase (e.g., "a little"), or a clause (e.g., "I feel"; Wajnryb, 1994, p. 289). Among their functions are making the criticism vaguer and less significant, reducing the quantity of a related item, and reducing certainty and obligation (Wajnryb, 1994).

Syntactic Devices

Syntactic mitigation devices account for mitigation strategies that are realized with the grammaticalization of politeness through the syntax of the language (Morallo, 2019). The sub-categories include tense shift, aspect shift, negating, interrogative structures, modal verbs, clause structures, and finally person shift.

Tense shifts allow the speakers to be politer and to mitigate their message. When the speaker chooses to use the past over the present, they distance that event from the present. Shift to present, on the other hand, occurs when the speaker wants to show solidarity with the addressee. Aspect as a grammatical category is concerned with how the action described by the verb is perceived, such as whether or not it is ongoing, continuous, recurring, or instant. Pragmatically, aspect shift makes the event more uncertain and less specific. Examples include nominalization using the -ing form to focus on the process that make the criticism more acceptable, such as "making them aware" rather than "make them aware" (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 238). Next, negation as a mitigation device is used to "mitigate rather than eliminate the representation of the negated concept" (Giora et al., 2005, p. 83). Negation serves the purposes of stating remarks that are considerably less informative, reducing the power of direct criticism, and letting the speaker reduce the criticism from an obligation to an option. For instance, "it's not necessarily the best way to learn" (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 244).

Another type of syntactic mitigation device is interrogative structures. They are basically questions used as a mitigation strategy by supervisors to transform the criticism into a polite request. Supervisors make use of questions as an alternative to statements in that they give the opportunity to alter an "I" statement into a "you" question, turning criticism into obvious inquiry, as in "were you happy with the language analysis?" (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 246). Moreover, modal verbs are used as a source of pragmatic exploitation to reduce the assertiveness of the critical feedback. They can suggest a myriad of meanings such as degree of probability, attitude, and politeness (Morallo, 2019). As the final syntactic strategy, person shift can come in shift to the third person, shift to the first person, or shift to the second person in the ambivalent form. Shifting to third person gives the supervisor the opportunity to disguise the direction of the critical feedback, as in the example "I thought it worked well, but it wasn't always consistent." Mitigation occurs with the shift to the first person by the supervisor focusing the conversation on him/her to create a sense of solidarity. Finally, shift to second person removes the specificity of the person to whom the feedback is directed to, thus reducing the face-threatening effect of the criticism such as

"instead of <u>you</u> always asking the questions is to get them ask <u>you</u> a question," which makes it less obvious to tell whether the supervisor is referring to the teacher as the addressee or people in general (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 265).

Methodology

Participants

There are two main participants in this study. The first one is the researcher who acted as the peer-supervisor and the second one is the subject who works as an EFL teacher in Turkey to whom the peer-supervisor delivered feedback regarding her lessons. Both participants are native speakers of Turkish with a high proficiency in English as a foreign language. The second participant voluntarily took part in the study as she saw it as an opportunity to improve her awareness concerning her classroom teaching practices. Classroom observations are normally conducted in the private elementary school the subject is working for with teachers observing each other's classes as part of their professional development, but the subject thought doing the study with the researcher would provide her with new perspectives as the researcher is pursuing her graduate studies in the field. The relationship between the participants allowed for a peer-supervisory context as they had known each other for more than 10 years studying at the same high school and pursuing similar career paths.

Data Collection Procedure

After agreeing to take part in the study, the teacher informed the principals in her school to receive their permission for her classes to be observed by an outside researcher. Following the principals' and parents' permission, the peer-supervisor and the teacher met for a pre-observation conference the main purpose of which was for the researcher to familiarize with the lesson plan, course materials and objectives. Moreover, the goal of pre-observation conference was also to decide on areas of concern the teacher might want to address in the post-observation conferences (Yürekli, 2013). After the pre-observation conference, the peer-supervisor observed a third grade class in which native Turkish-speaking students are learning English as a foreign language. The peer-supervisor observed the same classroom three times, following each observation with a post-observation conference where she delivered her feedback to the teacher. Thus, the data collection procedure involved six steps. First, the peer-supervisor observed the lessons via Zoom as all classroom instruction went online in Turkey in the spring 2021 semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While observing the lesson, the peer-supervisor took field notes while recording the lesson. The second step involved transcribing the lesson and analyzing it based on the field notes. The second step also involved deciding what type of feedback the peer-supervisor would like to give to the teacher based on the points discussed in the pre-observation conference. In the third step, the peer-supervisor scripted the feedback she wanted to deliver to the teacher using the mitigation devices conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994). The next step included the post-observation conference where the peer-supervisor delivered her feedback to the teacher and the two discussed issues related to the classroom instruction over Zoom. In the fifth stage, the teacher wrote in her reflective journal her thoughts about the post-observation conference using a google doc for the peer-supervisor to peruse. In the final step, the peer-supervisor transcribed the conversations between herself and the teacher and went through the teacher's journal for a detailed analysis.

Data Analysis
Qualitative methodology was used to analyze the data from the scripted and the actual feedback delivered in the post-observation conferences as they constituted the main data in this study. Qualitative methodology allows for an interpretation process which includes immersion in the data with the purpose of understanding phenomena with respect to the meanings people make of them (Richards, 2009). For the current study, qualitative methodology gives the opportunity to analyze the language used in the post-observation conferences to understand the extent to which the language allows for a growth-oriented and non-threatening peer-supervisory context for the teacher. To achieve this, the peer-supervisor transcribed the conversations that took place in each post-observation conference. The peer-supervisor then analyzed the language used in her feedback in terms of what mitigation devices were utilized and what responses the teacher gave to the feedback to investigate whether the mitigation devices were successful in creating a non-threatening and growth-oriented supervisory context. Each instance of delivering feedback and the teacher's responses were extracted from the transcription to conduct a detailed analysis of the interaction between the peer-supervisor and the teacher. Moreover, the journals kept by the teacher were also analyzed qualitatively to understand if the language used in the peer-supervision process was effective in increasing teacher awareness regarding her instruction.

Findings

Language Analysis in the First Post-Observation Conference
For the first post-observation conference, there were two main points of feedback ("F") that the peer-supervisor wished to deliver to the teacher partly based on what they discussed in the pre-observation conference. The scripted feedback was as follows:

> POC1 F1: "I noticed that students hardly ever use the target language, except for when answering your questions."
> POC1 F2: "I thought the lesson was really great, but I was just wondering, could you also add more student-centered activities?"

The way these scripted utterances was conveyed during the post-observation conference was similar to how they were structured. Below is the actual conversation that took place between the teacher and the supervisor:

> F1:
> 1   S: **I also noticed during the lesson [teacher's name] that students hardly ever**
> 2   **use the target language. Except for answering your questions.** What do you
> 3   think is the reason for that?
> 4   T: As you said, how can I say, the levels of students are very different. I should
> 5   have some differentiation activities for them. I should check every student whether
> 6   they are listening or not. Sometimes they are just there physically but mentally they
> 7   are not there so I need to check every student. I always yes I always follow English
> 8   but sometimes I need to speak Turkish because when you speak English all the
> 9   time, they get blind. If you warn them in English sometimes they just don't care but
> 10 when I switch to Turkish, their attention is on me. So it works, when they are not

11   on task I switch to Turkish. But they are not very actively using English. That's one
12   of my problems. When it's face-to-face education, it's okay. They are always
13   pushing themselves to speak in English but when they are online something
14   happens. I don't know why. Maybe it's because they are at home. They have
15   different distractive tools around them. Sometimes the parents are talking,
16   sometimes their toys are there. Something on the background is on. […………] So
17   I should always force them to speak in English.

F2:
1   S: I thought the lesson was great. **But I was just wondering if you could add more**
2   **student centered activities.**
3   T: yeah, it was one of my concerns you remember. This was one of my concerns.
4   Teacher talking time is a lot. Maybe it is about my attitude. I always try to control
5   the students. And maybe I should give them more control. It was just a few minutes
6   I told them to become the teachers. But you're right. I should give them more
7   opportunity. I feel like they are just passive listeners. Answering the questions.

In lines 1 and 2 of the first comment, the teacher used clause structure to formulate her criticism which is among the syntactic mitigation devices. Clause structures are constructed with a perception word in the main clause with the criticism incorporated in the subordinate clause. They are used to reduce the effect of the criticism while allowing the listener to voice an opinion or even disagree. In the data, by asking the teacher what she thought could be the reason, the supervisor already invited the teacher to respond to her criticism. The perception word *notice* still suggests subjectivity which gives the teacher room to reject or disagree with the feedback. In fact, the teacher provided an explanation from her point of view that indicates that the way the peer-supervisor structured her language allowed for negotiability for this particular criticism.

Additional feedback involves both syntactic and semantic mitigation devices. The way it was scripted was slightly different than how it was uttered during the conversation. In the script, the peer-supervisor used a clause structure, but then added a direct question to it. However, during the actual conversation, the peer-supervisor used a question embedded in the clause structure. The reason for this could be that embedded questions as conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994) may have also sounded more natural to the peer-supervisor at the time of the conversation. The implications for this change in the peer-supervisor's language are twofold. First, by studying the mitigation devices prior to the post-observation conferences, the peer-supervisor develops an unconscious understanding of the use of mitigation devices. Second, despite the fact that the peer-supervisor is a non-native speaker of English, her supervisory language reflects the real language used by the supervisors who are native speakers of English.

Turning back to the analysis of the language, the peer-supervisor used both embedded questions and degree hedges to deliver her feedback that served three purposes in mitigating her language. First, embedded questions provide the criticism to be hidden in the subordinate clause which reduces the effect of what would have been a face-threatening act with a direct question. Another purpose allowed by embedded questions is to pre-empt defensiveness from the addressee by delaying the criticism. Finally, the word *just* reduced the force of the criticism by turning it into a mere inquiry. As a reaction to this criticism, the teacher admitted that it was one of her concerns, but instead of being a passive listener of the feedback, she identified her own areas of improvement and suggested ways to tackle with the perceived problem. In fact, in her journal entry after the POC, the teacher noted "you helped me realize that students shouldn't just be passive listeners, but

they should also use English themselves" addressing the peer-supervisor. This shows that the language structured in this particular comment not only mitigated the criticism, but also addressed the awareness aspect of teaching as discussed by Freeman (1989), which is one the most fundamental aims of post-observation conferences.

Language Analysis in the Second Post-Observation Conference
For the second post-observation conference, there were three pieces of main critical feedback that the peer-supervisor wanted to deliver. The scripted feedback was the following:

POC2 F1: "I just kind of felt that this lesson was a bit rushed."
POC2 F2: "I think it's important to allow time for students to realize one thing is finished and something else is starting."
POC 2 F3: "The instructions were a bit confusing for the students."

F1:
1   S: **About this lesson, I just kind of felt that it was a bit rushed. I felt like there**
2   **was a lot of exercises to cover.** You had reading. And then playing finger games,
3   showing right hand and left hand, and the name of the fingers, trying to write
4   without using the thumbs. I felt like there were a lot of things to do.
5   T: Yes, I totally agree with you. I'm always in a rush. I don't know why. Always
6   in a rush. I'm using exaggerated gestures, at the end of my lesson I feel very tired.
7   Maybe I should make my lessons more condensed. I should have just one or two
8   activities. I don't know why I'm just trying to cover all the activities. and calling
9   students all the time listen to me, eyes on me. I think you're right. I totally agree
10   with you.

F2:
1   S: ……. There also students couldn't follow what to do. **I thought it's important**
2   **to allow time for students to realize one thing is finished.**
3   T: you're right. I should slow down. Sometimes when I share the screen, it takes, it
4   comes a little bit later than I see, they see it later than I show it. So when I say read,
5   they say teacher wait I can't see the screen. So they say no I can't see the screen
6   and I'm like no come on read (laughs). That problem. I should slow down.

F3:
1   **S: I also thought [teacher] that the instructions were a bit confusing to**
2   **students.** […….] maybe this waiting time. you know like allowing students time
3   to think and absorb something. It might be also related to the first point. It was a bit
4   rushed. Because there were a lot of things you were trying to cover all of them.
5   **That's why even the instructions they were fast.**
6   T: they were fast and I don't like silence in the lesson. Because that's why I'm not
7   waiting. I should wait. They should understand first but I don't wait. When there's
8   silence I feel like they are not listening, they are busy with another thing, so they
9   shouldn't get silence. They should answer my questions immediately. I should ask
10   them one more. I should keep them engaged. But you're right I should slow down
11   and wait. They should think, they should internalize and then they can answer it.

Lines 1 and 2 of Feedback 1 demonstrate that the scripted and the actual criticism are almost identical. They were structured with two semantic mitigation devices: degree hedges and authority hedges. By using the phrase "I felt that," the supervisor dresses up the critical feedback as a subjective opinion. If we have a look at the criticism without the main clause, "it was a bit rushed," even with a degree hedge it sounds like a more direct criticism. Moreover, Wajnryb (1994) states that use of perception words suggests a cogitative act instead of a declarative act, which gives the addressee room to agree or disagree. In fact, the response from the teacher starts with the expression "I agree with you." Therefore, mitigation in this feedback occurs in two aspects. First, the supervisor assumes the responsibility for thinking a certain way about the lesson, which can be countered to be incorrect. Second, by disguising the criticism in the subordinate clause, the supervisor reduces the effect of what could have been a more direct and face-threatening criticism.

The second comment is also almost the same as the one scripted before the post-observation conference. The data indicates that authority hedges were utilized in the structuring of the second comment as well. The purpose of authority hedges was discussed above, so the analysis will continue with the lexical hedge also used to mitigate this particular criticism. Specifically, the peer-supervisor used style-shifted lexemes. Style-shifted lexemes allow for the non-technical language that reduces the distance between the supervisor and the teacher. The main argument the peer-supervisor is trying to make here is that teacher's wait time was not enough for students to understand what was going on in this lesson. Even though the term *wait time* would be used later in the post-observation conference, the peer-supervisor first establishes a sense of solidarity by delaying the use of more technical language until after a conversation occurs on the importance of wait time. Indeed, the response to this feedback from the teacher was a reflective one in which the teacher reflected on her own teaching practices, which can be seen in lines 6–11.

As for the third piece of feedback, the scripted and the actual versions are almost the same with a slight difference in prepositions. As well as using authority hedges like the previous ones, the peer-supervisor made use of aspect shift as a mitigation strategy. Aspect shifts serve to make the criticism less precise, and as discussed earlier, change the focus to the description of the event to reduce the bluntness of the criticism. The feedback would have been more direct and threatening if it was structured as "Your instructions confused the students or You confused the students with your instructions." By highlighting the process instead of the person who was the agent of that process, the criticism is mitigated, and focus is shifted to the event itself, not the teacher. The same also applied to the next feedback in line 5 of F3. The peer-supervisor again referred to the instructions as being fast, but not the teacher who was fast in giving the instructions. This resulted in the teacher referring to the instructions as being too fast, rather than saying, "I was fast." Another important aspect of this mitigation strategy for the current study is that the peer-supervisor had not scripted this part of the feedback before the post-observation conference. However, during the conversation, she made use of aspect shifts as a mitigation strategy unconsciously, which also suggests that her language reflects the supervisory language used by actual supervisors as conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994).

After the post-observation conference, the teacher mentioned in her journal that she could not realize she did not have enough waiting time for students and that the supervisor was in a position of *observer* instead of a *judge.* This indicates that mitigation devices used in the second post-observation conference were helpful in structuring a non-threatening supervisory context and post-observation conference environment. Data also indicate that the language used by the peer-

supervisor again addressed an aspect of the teacher's instruction that she was not previously aware of, which suggests that the second post-observation conference was also effective in raising teacher's awareness regarding her teaching practices.

Language Analysis in the Third Post-Observation Conference
In the third post-observation conference, there were two main critical feedback the peer-supervisor delivered. The following is the scripted feedback the peer-supervisor structured before the conference.

> POC3 F1: "It's always good to show the questions to the students before the listening or reading to give them a purpose for the task."
>
> POC 3 F2: "I was just wondering if you could allow some time first for the students. I know you don't want to use breakout rooms, but I thought it would be really helpful if students worked on them [the questions] by themselves."

For the third post-observation conference, the difference between the scripted and actual feedback was more apparent and the two feedbacks were somewhat intertwined with each other. Below is the transcript for both.

> F1 & F2:
> 1   S: [….] **I was thinking maybe you could show the students the questions first**
> 2   T: hmm yeah [taking notes]
> 3   S: Because **I think it's always good to show the questions to the students before**
> 4   **the listening or reading tasks to give them a purpose for the**
> 5   T: hmm, yeah you are right. You are right. They were listening but they didn't know
> 6   why they were listening. Which parts they should focus on. You are right.
> 7   S: that's what I was thinking. And also I think it was great that students were trying
> 8   to answer the questions, they were mostly engaged. **But I was just wondering if**
> 9   **you could allow some time for the students before the whole class discussion**. I
> 10   know you don't want to do breakout rooms, I understand that it can be tricky for
> 11   online lessons but it can be really a great opportunity for students to practice first-
> 12   T: hmm
> 13   S: before trying to answer, they can just, or maybe at least. Or what do you think?
> 14   T: yeah, actually you are right maybe I could tell students to think about the
> 15   questions individually first. For example you got one minute, everybody will focus
> 16   on the question 1, and then I will get your answers in silent. Everybody will be
> 17   muted. Or as you said I could put them in breakout rooms. There are four breakout
> 18   rooms there are four questions, each room will focus on one question maybe. And
> 19   then you'll discuss it.

As can be seen in the data, the peer-supervisor again resorts to using authority hedges to mitigate her language in line 1. This might be because she is a peer-supervisor and does not want to imply any expertise on her part, especially with the teacher having more experience in teaching EFL than the peer-supervisor. As discussed earlier, authority hedges are used to put the responsibility of the criticism on the supervisor, which suggest that the assertion might not be correct, but it is the supervisor who thinks this way. Moreover, the use of modal verbs and adverbs

such as *maybe* and *could* serve to decrease the harshness and the certainty of the criticism respectively. What's notable here is that this sentence was not scripted prior to the post-observation conference and happened in the flow of the conversation. This indicates that the peer-supervisor's spontaneous language in the third post-observation conference also started to reflect the mitigated language supervisors used in Wajnryb's (1994) study.

The second comment in line 3 involves person shift. Person shifts from the second person to third person allow for the agency of an action to become anonymous and removes the responsibility of the action from the teacher. The criticism here lies in the fact that the teacher did not show the questions before the task which led to a confusion for the students. Continuing from the previous feedback, instead of emphasizing that the teacher did not show the questions to the students, the peer-supervisor structures the language with a shift to third person singular to reduce the effect of the criticism.

The third comment which can be seen in lines 8–9 include both an embedded question and conditional subordination to mitigate the criticism. While the embedded question gives the teacher the opportunity to not respond to supervisor's message, conditional subordination changes what would have sounded like an instruction from the supervisor to an indirect suggestion. Indeed, instead of stating it as an obligation, the peer-supervisor is offering the use of break-out rooms as an option. The teacher's response clearly demonstrates how the hearer also perceives the message as an optionality. Her use of modal verbs indicate probability from her part, that she might use the breakout rooms in her future lessons. Presenting the criticism as an option also led the teacher to reflective thinking that even provided ways how to implement the suggestion in her lessons.

Following the post-observation conference, the teacher wrote in her journal that she wanted to use breakout rooms for her coming lessons. She also commented on how the way peer-supervisor gives suggestions motivates her more by saying, "Your use of language while giving suggestions encourages and motivates me more." The important thing to notice here is that she referred to the feedback as suggestion, which was the purpose of using particularly the conditional subordination.

Discussion

Issues in Language Teacher Supervision for Non-Native Supervisors
As previous research indicates, the fundamental purpose in conducting post-observation conferences is to create a non-threatening environment of professional learning and growth for the teacher, resulting from the effective use of mitigation strategies. For the language teacher supervisors who are also non-native speakers of English, mitigating their supervisory language in English poses a distinct challenge, one that requires pragmatic competence. Non-native supervisors who speak English as a foreign language might not have the pragmatic competence in English as pragmatic competence is mostly overlooked in the EFL context (Alqurashi, 2019). As use of mitigation devices might be demanding for even the native speakers of that language, the difficulty only increases for non-native speakers. Therefore, it is crucial for non-native supervisors to practice supervisory language skills containing mitigation devices that would create a non-threatening supervisory context.

Taking into consideration the analysis above, this study has implications for non-native language teacher supervisors concerning the language used in post-observation conferences. The data collected in the study suggest that studying and consciously making use of mitigation devices as conceptualized by Wajnryb (1994) could be an effective tool for non-native supervisors to learn

about and familiarize themselves with supervisory language. The data also show that even the unconscious language used by the peer-supervisor started to reflect a mitigated language that address the areas of concern for the teacher in a way that protects the face of the teacher, as a result of the non-native supervisor having studied mitigation devices prior to the post-observation conferences. Indeed, the teacher's responses to the feedback and journal entries on her thoughts about the post-observation conferences show that the non-native peer-supervisor managed to create a safe and non-threatening supervisory environment for the teacher.

Cross-Cultural Effects of Turkish on Mitigation in L2 English
Studies focusing on politeness and mitigation in Turkish found that Turkish speakers prefer to mitigate their language in ways Brown and Levinson (1987) termed "on-record negative politeness" (as cited in Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli, 1997; Erozan & Shibliyev, 2007). On record negative politeness refers to attending the hearer's needs to be independent and not to be imposed on by others, by using linguistic devices to compensate for the message that would otherwise be face-threatening. As such, language teacher supervision requires mitigating the language used in the post-observation conferences to reduce the effects of the feedback given to the teacher, which can also be considered on-record negative politeness. Since previous research suggests that Turkish speakers also employ such language strategies to protect the face of the hearer in face-threatening situations, we can argue that the participants' L1 has implications on the success of the peer-supervision process in this study in that Turkish speakers are familiar in similar discourses in their L1. Similar communication styles in both their L1 and L2 might have informed the peer-supervisor and the teacher's understanding of the mitigation devices in ways to create a growth-oriented and non-threatening peer-supervisory context to increase teacher awareness regarding teaching practices.

Implications for Further Research
Literature on the language teacher supervision have mostly focused on teacher perceptions concerning the classroom observations and post-observation conferences, but they have not said much about the language used in the post-observation conferences by non-native supervisors (Kahyalar & Yazici, 2016; Rahmany et al., 2014; Rehman & Al-Bargi, 2014; Shah & Al Harthi, 2014). However, investigating what kind of language strategies non-native language teacher supervisors use in the post-observation conferences is crucial as non-native teachers of English can also be in supervisor positions, sometimes even supervising native teachers. Therefore, this study has implications to encourage further research that would be helpful in improving the supervisory skills of non-native supervisors by conceptualizing the language strategies they employ in the post-observation conferences.

This study also has implications for cross-cultural considerations for the non-native language supervisors' L1. The data in this study showed that the peer-supervisory context was successful in creating a non-threatening and growth-oriented post-observation conferences to increase teacher awareness. However, the meaning making processes of the peer-supervisor and the teacher informed by their L1 might have also affected the outcome of the study, since their L1 Turkish and L2 English use similar conversational styles in situations where the face of the listener might be threatened by the message. Therefore, further research could also be conducted in which the non-native supervisor and the teacher are from different linguistic backgrounds to investigate the effects of L1 in the success or lack thereof, in creating a non-threatening supervisory context with the effective use of mitigation devices in English.

Conclusion

Language teacher supervision can be very challenging in that it requires supervisors to deliver critical feedback to the teachers, which, at times, can be a face-threatening act. Language used by the supervisors to structure critical feedback plays a crucial role in creating a safe and non-threatening supervisory context for the purposes of increasing teaching awareness. In a highly comprehensive study, Wajnryb (1994) identified various mitigation devices supervisors use as a language strategy to soften their criticism. In the present study, it was argued that by studying and consciously making use of these mitigation devices, supervisors who are second and foreign language learners of English can also provide effective supervision with the aim of increasing teacher awareness regarding their teaching practices.

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Challenges and Strategies Facing International Students and Faculty in U.S. Higher Education: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract

With increasing numbers of international students on university campuses in the U.S., culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) practices become more important than ever in helping students fit in a new environment and achieve their academic goals. However, not all universities and faculty are prepared or equipped with the knowledge to adopt CLR methods in classrooms across the disciplines. The purpose of this literature review is three-fold: (1) to examine the cultural and linguistic challenges that international students face in U.S. higher institutions; (2) to investigate faculty's perspectives on international students and implementing CLR practices in their classroom teaching; and (3) to explore CLR strategies or recommendations that have been used successfully to alleviate the challenges. In assessing the current status of CLR in tertiary education, this article reviewed 21 research studies and found that both international students and faculty at U.S. institutions of higher education are facing challenges in terms of language, culture, classroom discussions, academic expectations, and interpersonal relationships. These findings hold implications for promoting the development of CLR practices among faculty and tertiary institutions to foster a diverse campus capable of truly accommodating and supporting students from multicultural backgrounds.

Keywords

international students, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, challenges, faculty

Introduction

In the past decades, the number of international students in the U.S. has continued to increase, especially in higher education institutions. According to the *Open Doors 2019 Fast Facts* released by the Institute of International Education (2019), during the 2018/19 school year, the number of international students reached 1,095,299, representing 5.5% of the total number of students in the U.S. higher education. At each of the top 20 higher education institutions in the U.S., the percentage of enrolled international students ranges from 10% to over 40% of the whole student population (Martirosyan et al., 2019). This large number of international students has brought benefits to the U.S. in different aspects, such as increasing diversity and intercultural perspectives in the classroom, bringing knowledge in many fields, contributing capital to the U.S. economy, and promoting cultural exchange between countries (Lee & Rice, 2007). Referring to the latest report from the Association of International Educators, international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed $28.4 billion and supported 306,308 jobs in the U.S. in 2020–2021 (NAFSA, 2021). In addition to their roles as economic contributors, Kaya (2020) also pointed out that international students are diplomatic and peace leaders globally.

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However, this group of students faces unique challenges and pressures, including language barriers, academic challenges, social isolation, and cultural adjustments (Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017; Kibelloh & Bao, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). Among these, international students' limited English language proficiency in college-level coursework became the primary obstacle for them to achieve academic success as well as for professors to explain course tasks and concepts (Wu et al., 2015). For international students whose primary language is one other than English, it may take five to seven years to achieve the level of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which requires a complete understanding of the cultural and linguistic knowledge in the target language (Bilash, 2011). International students who plan to complete their programs or degrees in the U.S., whether at the undergraduate or graduate level, need support in discipline-specific language learning, academic performance, and social connections to overcome language and sociocultural barriers. According to Arthur (2017) and Crose (2011), professors and classmates are vital resources for international students to learn the content knowledge and culture in the target language, especially for newcomers. Another resource lies in the peers that share the same language or culture; however, this kind of support may not prove reliable or consistent (McMahon, 2018).

Even though international students expect high levels of language and academic support from faculty, faculty often have a belief that language support for international students is not part of their responsibilities. Thus, faculty prefer international students to seek assistance outside of their classes in the form of language instructors, writing centers, and staff in the international office (Gallagher & Haan, 2018). In other words, faculty believe that language teaching should not be covered in their classes; a belief that contrasts with our understanding of the interconnectedness of language and content knowledge (Cummins, 1981). Indeed, Haan et al. (2017) found that there was a gap between "international students' needs and the faculty's knowledge of this group of students" (p. 38). Further exacerbating the situation is that faculty and even language instructors have limited training and knowledge of teaching multilingual students (Schneider, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to help faculty and staff understand the challenges international students face and provide the skills they need to meet students' linguistic and cultural expectations in courses.

One promising practice that has developed over the past 50 years is culturally responsive teaching (CRT) which aims to support students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Hollins, 2008; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). It is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical references to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). Based on CRT, Hollie (2017) developed culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) teaching and learning practices and describes them as "the validation and affirmation of the home (indigenous) culture and home language for building and bridging the student to access in the culture of academia and mainstream society" (p. 23). Hollie (2017) stated that CLR is opposite to the "sink-or-swim approach" (p. 23) that lets the students survive or fail themselves; CLR emphasizes the support and appropriate instructions students received from teachers until they became independent in learning. Researchers believe that CLR benefits all students, especially those from different races, cultures, and languages (Haan et al., 2017; Hollie, 2017). Similarly, describing linguistically responsive instruction (LRI), Gallagher and Hann (2018) cited an LRI framework that explains the knowledge and skills to support emergent multilingual students,

(a) understanding ELLs [English language learners] from a bilingual and bicultural perspective; (b) understanding how language and culture shape school experiences and inform pedagogy for bilingual learners; and (c) ability to mediate a range of contextual factors in the schools and classrooms where they teach. (de Jong et al., 2013, p. 306)

However, there is a dearth of literature on CLR practices. One reason for the lack of work in this area may stem from the perceptions that the academic outcomes of CRT/CLR/LRI practices are hard to measure, or that these practices are at once comprehensive and too abstract for application in classroom teaching (Hollie, 2017). Also, most of the existing literature focuses on students in K–12 settings in the U.S. While scholars have stressed the importance of learner-centered education and culturally relevant teaching in K–12 settings, one finds minimal attention to CLR practices at the tertiary level (Han et al., 2014). While we understand pre-service and in-service teachers' needs to understand diverse students' needs and integrate CLR teaching strategies, we do not have that same expectation for college professors. How do we equip professors in different disciplines with the knowledge to effectively teach their international students? When monolingualism is the norm in the U.S. education system, how do we prepare faculty and reexamine the higher education level curriculum when we enroll an increasing number of international students? Research in this area is vital because a large number of international students struggle with adjusting to new academic and cultural standards (Haan et al., 2017). Therefore, the purpose of the literature review is to explore challenges faced by international students, examine how CLR might improve their experiences, and make recommendations for institutions and faculty who want to help them. Ultimately, the literature review will focus on the following questions:

1. What challenges do new international students face in higher education in the U.S.?
2. What are faculty's perspectives towards international students and their academic performance?
3. How do faculty understand and apply CLR practices in their classroom teaching?
4. What CRT/CLR/LRI practices are recommended to mediate challenges for international students in U.S. tertiary institutions?

Methodology of Literature Review
This literature review aims to examine the research findings in published, empirical and conceptual research on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in higher education, focusing specifically on international students who have just started their university lives in the U.S. Therefore, the review is limited to peer-reviewed articles that focused on faculty members and international students in academia between 2010 and 2020 since this is the period when the U.S. higher education institutions enrolled the largest number of international students in history (Israel & Batalova, 2021). First, empirical studies employing quantitative and qualitative methods and conceptual research from international sources, such as *Google Scholar*, *ERIC*, *EBSCOhost*, *Jstor*, *Psyc Infor*, *Sage*, and *Wiley Online Library* were identified. Manuals, guidelines, and books published on the Institute of International Education (2019) website, an organization supporting international education and collaboration across higher education institutions, were also included. The key terms included *faculty*, *new international students*, *culture and linguistic or language*, *challenges or barriers or difficulties*, *linguistically responsive teaching*, *culturally responsive teaching*, *higher education*, and some synonymous terms, such as *professors*, *internationalization*,

college, *university*, and *academia*. One primary aim of the review is to provide practical instructions for faculty in different disciplines to help international students achieve their academic goals and accommodate an intercultural learning environment. Therefore, conceptual articles and commentaries that are related to language support programs and learner-centered pedagogical practices were examined. The last step was to examine the articles' references to locate additional relevant articles that could be included in the literature review. Finally, one book and 37 articles, 16 of which focused on K–12 and teacher education were identified. I excluded these 16, leaving a sample of 21 articles dealing with a tertiary educational context. After the initial review, I wrote an annotated bibliography entry for each article and marked the themes that emerged from the article and connected them to the research questions. The table in the appendix shows the basic information of each article and the frequency of emerged themes that include benefits of hosting international students, challenges that international students face, faculty's opinions and knowledge on international students and CRT/CLR/LRI practices, and suggested CRT/CLR/LRI practices.

Theoretical Frameworks and Models
The literature review is grounded on the epistemology of constructivism, which "maintains that individuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already believe and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact" (Ültanır, 2012, p. 195). According to Ladson-Billings (2003), it is crucial to reinforce this epistemological concept because it reveals a system of knowing the world. It helps us understand that how one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply by one's worldview. The conditions under which people live and learn shape both their knowledge and their world views. The process of developing a worldview that differs from the dominant world view requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant worldview and knowledge production and acquisition processes (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258).

Before attempting to support international students' learning and academic success, it is necessary to understand their "ways of knowing" (Kasun, 2015, p. 277) which is shaped by their cultural and educational experiences. Under the constructivist epistemology, the overarching theoretical perspectives that inform this literature review are sociocultural theory and critical inquiry. First, sociocultural theory was developed by Vygotsky (1978), who posited that social interactions, language, and culture play an important role in learning and understanding the world. Influenced by Vygotsky, Bruner (1966, 1971, 1996) emphasized the impact of teachers' instruction, schooling and curricula, cultural awareness, and interactions on students' cognitive development. Since instruction must be structured and designed with concerns of the learners' experiences and their willingness to learn (Bruner, 1966), it is necessary to examine the faculty's thoughts in accommodating an increasing number of international students. Thus, the second focus of the literature review is to investigate faculty's awareness when they host international students whose cultures, values, languages, and studying habits are different from the dominant ones.

Critical inquiry is another lens to examine learning in social, cultural, and historical contexts. Lewis et al. (2012) stated that sociocultural theory "has allows us to explore the intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and, more recently, political aspects of people's sense-making, interaction, and learning around texts" (p. 2). However, it did not address the impact of "power, identity, and agency" (p. 2) on learning and practice. Power exists in our

social micro and macro systems, and it plays a vital role in opportunities to learn and impacts people's lives in unpredictable ways (Moje & Lewis, 2012), especially for those who are in marginalized and neglected positions. For international students who live in a country other than their own, they have no power against policies, routines, regulations, rules when the dominate culture reproduces, enacts, and normalizes the social and learning system that subordinate the cultures of others. According to Potts and Brown (2005), from a critical perspective, "research must be about empowering the marginalized and promoting action against inequities" (p. 208). In sum, the literature review examines the CLR practices in higher education through sociocultural and critical lenses and includes perspectives from international students, faculty, staff, and school administrators or leaders. The following section discusses what the literature says about international students' challenges and how faculty could help with alleviating the challenges by integrating CRT/CLR/LRI practices.

Synthesis of Literature

International Students' Challenges
In addition to the barriers and struggles international students face to varying degrees, such as cultural adjustment, mental stress, academic pressure, financial hardships, and homesickness (Hung, 2006; Martirosyan et al., 2015; McMahon, 2018; Wu et al., 2015), they also confront cultural and linguistic challenges upon moving to the U.S. When examining the challenges that international students face, it is vital to avoid generalization. Instead, there is a need to pay close attention to differences among international students since they have contextual and multifaceted needs (Kaya, 2020). As Heng (2018) stated, it was a stereotype and bias to generalize Chinese students as passive, unsocial, and annoying learners without a theoretical framework to examine their experiences in-depth. We need to know what reasons typically cause the students' lack of ability in language, social involvement, and academic performances.

English proficiency. As the predominantly used language in classes, English is a tool with which international students survive and succeed in the U.S. higher institutions. A higher level of English proficiency is a challenge for emergent multilingual students who must meet the requirements of disciplinary knowledge, academic language, and social conventional English skills at the same time (Haan et al., 2017). To make sure that international students' English skills are proficient enough to fulfill the academic requirements, most American universities need students to pass some standardized English proficiency tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), as one of the required admission requirements. However, a satisfactory test score is not equivalent to a higher level of ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English. In Heng's (2018) study, which focused on the challenges of Chinese undergraduate students who were admitted to U.S. universities, he found that participants felt inadequate in their English foundation knowledge, particularly in speaking, writing, and logical thinking skills. The Chinese students achieved the required English proficiency test scores but still struggled with communicating in English, understanding lectures, and writing assignments. One of the reasons for their successful proficiency scores stems from intensive test training courses, which emphasize exam techniques over language skills (Ravichandran et al., 2017; Tung, 2016).

In the study by Ravichandran et al. (2017), researchers found their participants who were 15 international graduate students representing 11 countries from various fields of study faced

language challenges tied to academic performance. The results of their study showed that writing was the most challenging language skill for international graduate students, especially in "English grammar and vocabulary, style guide use, organization and flow of information, critical thinking, understanding of plagiarism, and assignment completion time" (p. 772). Because there is a positive correlation between international students' English language ability (writing, reading, listening, speaking) and their academic performance (measured by GPA; Martirosyan et al., 2015), international students who struggle with English may have anxiety that weakens their academic performances in higher education.

Other researchers (e.g., Daller & Phelan, 2013; Gautam et al., 2016; Li et al., 2010) also found that language proficiency is the key determinant that could influence international students' academic performance and international students whose first language is one other than English would take a longer time to master academic skills in the host country. Therefore, Martirosyan et al. (2015) stated that professors in different disciplines are critical to support the students' English language needs by building up an international student-friendly environment and providing appropriate courses, tutoring, and pedagogical strategies. In addition, Roy (2013) demonstrated that the differences between Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) international students' native language systems and English had caused their insufficient English proficiency. She pointed out that the American professors' teaching styles and language usages, such as using idioms, jokes, colloquialisms, and complex sentences, also created barriers for the international students' understanding of the content of lectures.

Social isolation. In addition to language challenges and academic pressure, international students also face cultural shock and social disconnections. Social isolation is a common issue among international students, and it has been reflected in many studies (Kaya, 2020; Martirosyan et al., 2015; Ravichandran et al., 2017; Tung, 2016). This phenomenon was caused by many reasons, such as personalities, language deficiencies, unfamiliarity with the culture (Tung, 2016), and having no access to get involved in social activities (Kaya, 2020). Lack of social activities could impact international students' mental health and academic performance. There were many suggested solutions, for example, providing opportunities for international students to interact with domestic students who can help with their social adjustment (Martirosyan et al., 2015), and pairing international students and local students as language peers, or setting up a community for conversations and sharing different perspectives (Lin & Scherz, 2014).

Even though many universities provided opportunities to promote intercultural communication between local and international students, the outcomes did not fulfill the goals. From international students' perspective, it is hard to build up friendships, enhance their English language skills, and get a deeper understanding of American culture through limited communication times with native-English speakers (Kaya, 2020). Also, Ravichandran et al. (2017) found that conversational partners did not work well because the communication was not consistent. Some native English-speaking peers were not talkative or had no knowledge to start a conversation with a non-native speaker. Some of them just showed up one or two times and never contacted the international students because of their schedule. Therefore, many international students were still in a socially isolated situation and had limited opportunities to enhance their English and understanding of the culture outside of the classrooms.

In Tung's (2016) study, Chinese international students' social isolation in the U.S. was caused by lack of knowledge of western culture and their cultural heritage and traditions. These studies clearly revealed that these challenges were caused by the differences between students'

cultural and educational background but not their learning skills or abilities. Hence, it is critical to look beyond the international students' challenges and to avoid assumptions before constructing a supportive curriculum, a class, a strategy, or practices. In the next section, the literature review focuses on faculty's perspectives on international students and CRT/CLR practices.

Faculty's Views on International Students and CRT/CLR Practices

It is also necessary to think from the faculty's perspective in terms of the trend of "internationalization" in the context of higher education. What are faculty facing when they have international students in their classes, yet they lack adequate awareness and training? How do faculty understand CRT or CLR practices in academia with full teaching and research loads? Among 21 reviewed articles, only eight of them addressed this issue and studied the faculty's position towards international students as well as CLR practices. Compared to the other three themes (see Table 1), faculty's opinions and experiences are underrepresented in the literature.

Faculty's challenges. According to Haan et al. (2017), although internationalization benefits the host campus, local students, and international students, both students and faculty face challenges caused by cultural and linguistic differences. This issue is more obvious for emergent multilinguals who need to meet the requirements of disciplinary knowledge, academic language, and social conventional English skills at the same time. Haan et al. (2017) stated that international students have been considered as guests but never a host in the university. They may not have the power to request that the dominant schooling system make accommodations for their cultural and linguistic needs. From the faculty's perspective, it is not acceptable to lower the curricular standards to satisfy the students. Rather, it is the students' responsibility to fit in the mainstream culture and meet the standards (Hann et al., 2017). Also, when faculty are expected to adjust their teaching and curriculum, it is necessary to consider the professional training, guidance, and even allowances to support their efforts. Without any agreement between the school leaders and faculty on the goals of recruiting and cultivating international students, it is hard to expect outcomes of successful international education. As stated in Ravichandran et al. (2017), it is not enough to recruit international students but ignore their unique cultural and linguistic needs. In most studies, researchers found that faculty welcome internationalization and international students, but they also face unique challenges and have low self-efficacy in serving this group of students' needs (Hann et al., 2017; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Washburn & Hargis, 2017).

To illustrate, in Washburn and Hargis' (2017) case study, they interviewed nine faculty in three distinct U.S. universities and found four themes of faculty's challenges that emerged from transcripts coded by a cross-case analysis method. The themes included language/cultural challenges, teaching and learning challenges, ethnic perceptions, and enrollment desires. First, the presence of international students may have impacted the dynamics in the classroom because of cultural and linguistic differences. Some faculty stated that they need to learn about cultures and be sure that the local students can respect the international students' cultures as well. Meanwhile, faculty need to make a balance between international students and local students' needs because they cannot pay too much attention to international students and neglect local students. Also, they expressed that international students' various levels of English proficiency impacted the depth of their instruction. Second, faculty face challenges regarding instructional preparation and adjustments to create a more inclusive learning environment. Some of them said that they need support from the administration before preparing classes, otherwise faculty members were not able to make any adjustments since students' names alone do not suffice for information about cultural

differences before the start of the semester. Third, faculty also experience ethnic challenges with various cultures in the classroom.

As Kisch (2014) discussed, university professors face challenges when they have an increasing number of international students with diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, they may not be aware of the cultural norms in different countries, such as gender separation during group work for students from Saudi Arabia. Washburn and Hargis (2017) also found that faculty prefer European students over Asian students because of their more potent English abilities and similar cultural backgrounds. The last challenge mentioned in the study is the enrollment pressure the faculty face. The researchers found that faculty stressed giving international students' passing grades "regardless of their academic abilities" (p. 14) because their schools would like to keep the students for financial revenues and religious missions. Overall, the faculty in this small-sample study showed a positive attitude towards international students. Still, they were also stressed with enrolling a larger number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the face of limited support from the administration.

Faculty's attitudes on hosting and teaching international students. Even though faculty face multifaceted challenges in supporting international students, they held a positive attitude towards internationalization and having more international students (Hann et al., 2017; Jin & Schneider, 2019). In Jin and Schneider's (2019) empirical study, the results showed that faculty held a positive stance of hosting international students on campus and would like work with them for the following reasons: "international students offer different and diverse views; they have better academic performances; they bring global perspectives to class discussions and assignments; and they contribute to campus multilingualism" (p. 89). Also, the researchers found that faculty could understand the challenges that international students face, which had been categorized as "academic challenges, sociocultural challenges, and other challenges related to finances, legal status, and professional aspirations" (p. 89). However, faculty have low self-efficacy in serving international students' needs and have a high ratio of negative responses regarding the level of support the university was providing for the students (Hann et al., 2017). Faculty felt that international students' cultural and linguistic characteristics could become obstacles for them to teach, which indicated a negative attitude toward the need to adjust teaching methods (Jin & Schneider, 2019). The faculty also believed that the primary supports should be "outside of the classroom" (p. 44), since the university received the benefits from recruiting international students whereas faculty did not receive additional benefits, such as a salary increase (Hann et al., 2017).

University level CRT/CLR/LRI support. To explore what efforts universities made to support international students, Martirosyan et al. (2019) examined academic and social support services provided to international students by reviewing websites of the top 20 universities with the greatest enrollment of international students in 2016. Among the top 20 institutions, the percentage of international student enrollment ranged from over 10% to over 40% of the overall student population. The researchers categorized six themes from content analysis of academic and social services offered by the institutions: English language programs, academic support and student success initiatives, targeted writing support, social and cultural events, professional development workshops, and family member programs. These services were free of charge to international students except the English language programs. Most of these language programs focused on general English skills, instead of the language that is connected to the students' content area. There is only one institution that offers English courses in students' specific disciplines (Boston

University Global Programs) in addition to general English language classes. This indicates a gap between English language acquisition and content knowledge learning in the English language preparation programs. Also, only one institution provided speech therapy to all students who needed accent modification. Several universities provided English Conversation Hours and Language Exchange for international students to communicate or to pair up with local students. These are chances to improve their English proficiency and get to know peers from the same discipline. However, there is no data to show how many students utilize these services or their feedback about their effects. The other services, such as academic support (online or face-to-face workshops and webinars) and writing support, were available to all students at the university. Among 20 institutions, there is only one university that provides writing consultants for graduate students who need to improve their writing skills and navigate graduate life.

From this study, it is obvious that the packaged services are not customized for international students. The English language program charged extra and was disconnected from students' content knowledge. In addition, this study was based on descriptions of universities' websites that tended to recruit more international students, therefore, it was not reflective of the users' perspectives. For example, many schools include writing centers to improve writing ability, however, there was no evidence on how international students benefit from this service when they meet difficulties in their disciplines. Furthermore, none of the websites mentioned the support that international students could get from faculty in their disciplines.

From these studies, it is evident that faculty have dichotomous views on international education and students. On one hand, they understand the challenges that international students face and most faculty participants in the studies agreed that international students needed extra attention and support not only in the class but also from the administration. On the other hand, faculty faced challenges in learning the international students' cultures and languages to facilitate their academic work. To be specific, they were also expecting support to create an inclusive classroom and construct an effective teaching environment that could meet both international students and local students' needs. Furthermore, the services that universities provided are not adequate to support international students' English language and content knowledge learning. Fortunately, many researchers and educators (Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Gopal, 2011; Haan et al., 2017; Roy, 2013) paid attention to the gap between students' and faculty's challenges and the resources provided for them. They emphasized the importance to equip faculty with CRP/CLRLRI knowledge and implement CRP/CLR/LRI related practices to teaching, since CPR/CLR/LRI practices can benefit students (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018). Therefore, the following studies focused on CLR teaching practices that could be incorporated into higher education.

Suggested CRP/CLR Related Practices for Higher Education Educators
The previous sections demonstrate that both international students and faculty face dilemmas in higher education. Even though CRP/CLR /LRI practices are an effective framework to serve multilingual and multicultural students, it is challenging to articulate CRP/CLR/LRI practices or frameworks in higher education because of its complex and multidimensional features (Han et al., 2014). Applying CRP/CLR/LRI practices to the U.S. higher institutions involves multiple layers of understanding about culture, language, educational differences, teachers' cognition, students' backgrounds, classroom practices, and administrators' efforts. The following section describes practices that could support faculty understanding international students' linguistic and cultural needs in higher education.

Professional Development

First and foremost, it is necessary to provide professional development (PD) opportunities to prepare the faculty's mindsets and intercultural competencies for teaching international students. As Arthur (2017) states, "many faculty members in higher education are appointed due to their expertise in an academic discipline and they may not receive formal training in pedagogical practices for supporting international students" (p. 889). Gopal (2011) asserts that it is difficult for faculty to provide equitable learning opportunities to international students if there is no adequate and systematic cross-cultural training. Haan et al. (2017) advocated PD in Linguistically Responsive Instruction (LRI) for faculty because "using linguistically-responsive and supportive practices and responding flexibly to students' varying needs promotes equitable educational outcomes for all students." (p. 48). Gallagher and Haan (2018) also state that faculty need to understand the knowledge of second language acquisition as well as linguistically responsive teaching practices to support students' language development.

Since faculty are vital resources for international students to make connections and adjust to the local context, it is essential to introduce the unique characteristics and challenges international students have in the new faculty orientation and ongoing professional development sessions (Arthur, 2017). When discussing the faculty's responses toward time limitation for the professional development of learning pedagogical practices of LRI, Gallagher and Haan (2018) proposed a "university-wide effort to involve all stakeholders in planning for supporting faculty, staff, and student success throughout the internationalization process and clearly communicating these decisions and plans to all" (p. 318).

Faculty's beliefs. First, faculty must learn to be open to other cultures and to avoid ethnocentricity which is the belief that one culture is superior to the others. According to Arthur (2017), ethnocentrism is problematic in the curriculum since it privileges local practices and neglects students' voices from other cultures. Teaching international students provides faculty an opportunity to examine their own cultural awareness, which allows them to understand their identities and cultures from a different perspective. Gopal (2011) stated that intercultural competency is essential "for navigating the continuum of globalization" (p. 379). Both Gopal (2011) and Roy (2013) emphasized the core elements of developing faculty's intercultural competence included self-reflection and self-awareness of cultural differences. It starts with faculty's attitudes of valuing students who have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, beliefs, and habits of learning. It requires faculty awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Roy, 2013) to realize the international students' learning habits and struggles. Faculty in international education also need to be aware that international students are not a homogeneous group. While delivering instructions (Roy, 2013) and developing programs and curriculum (Arthur, 2017), it is important for faculty to consider the impact of international students' identities on their academic performances (Arthur, 2017; Roy, 2013).

To achieve the goal, Roy (2013) provided American professors recommendations in their work with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students. For instance, professors need to be aware of the meaning of students' body language because the students may feel uncomfortable asking questions in class or have difficulties expressing their feelings in English. Also, professors need to understand the process and stages of international students' English language development. Roy listed methods to help overcome the language barriers between students and professors, such as using translating tools and providing notes ahead of classes. More importantly, Roy pointed out that professors need to be empathetic to what international students are experiencing to overcome

language and life challenges for their academic goals and be respectful to their efforts. Even though Roy's article focused on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students who shared a culture distinct from that of western and local students, the strategies can be useful in other settings to support international students from other countries.

Kisch (2014) also provided ten practical tips for faculty to support international students, such as "being proactive in communicating with international students, normalizing office hours, checking in with students after assigning group work, talking to students individually and encouraging them to share their unique perspectives, and clarifying expectations from students" (p. 46). These tips and suggestions aim to with examining faculty's beliefs while working with international students. Because "teachers' beliefs, pedagogical approaches, and resources" (Li, 2020, p. 35) are all important in fostering the language learners' active learning attitude.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of faculty's self-reflection and self-awareness, Arthur (2017) listed two other key factors that could support international students' transition to the host country: counselors who can help with initial adjustment and culture shock, and local students who could also benefit from interaction with international students. Meanwhile, merely putting international students and local students together does not always promote cross-cultural interactions. It is a complicated and stressful process since "interacting with people from different cultures can create feelings of uncertainty and anxiety" (Gopal, 2011, p. 379). Effective and mutual learning happens in more structured, collaborative, and scaffolded activities (Arthur, 2017). In other words, it takes systematic efforts to increase the quality of international education, not just the quantity of recruited students. In addition to suggestions on faculty PD, some researchers introduced models and strategies to alleviate the challenges that international students and faculty face.

Program design. Kisch (2014) introduces a one-stop service that integrates academic, immigration, and student/community engagement for international students and faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in the U.S. According to Kisch, the International Student and Scholar program contributed to international students' retention by 3.7% from 2008 to 2013. Shane et al. (2020) introduced a first-term foundation course that is required for all international graduate students who received their undergraduate or higher degrees from countries other than the U.S. The 11-week course's overarching goal was to improve international students' academic skills and build their self-confidence in English oral and written communication. There were several advantages of the program. First, to ensure that instructors know each students' challenges well, the class size was limited to 16 students. Second, the course scaffolded the students in different areas but was not limited to academic skills. For example, students had opportunities to interact with native English speakers and build up their social network at a place called *Communication Cafe*. To keep the program running, all the native speakers were volunteers who earned points for classes. The instructors also directed students to participate in various on-campus clubs and other university events. Furthermore, the course covered required knowledge for success in the graduate programs, such as presentation skills, academic honesty, and creative thinking skills.

Classroom practices. In terms of strategies to help international students alleviate academic and social challenges, there are practical suggestions that could be integrated into the classroom teaching in U.S. higher education system. The suggestions provided by Crose (2011), Gallagher and Haan (2018), and Ravichandran et al. (2017) are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Classroom Practices that Alleviate Challenges

Instructional Strategies	- Provide explicit and constructive feedback on assignments, not only research ideas but also grammatical usage. - Pay more attention to linguistic errors on the writing assignments. - Provide printed handouts to students and allow students to record the classes. - Introduce a variety of assessment methods and grading rubrics. To provide formative feedback. - Eliminate timed writing assignments to ensure students have enough time to have a deeper reflection on their writing.
Classroom Environment	- Create an inviting classroom environment by not skewing to the host culture. - Cultivate an internationalized classroom: encourage the local students to interact with international students who view the interaction as opportunities to improve their English and integrate into the host culture. - Utilize techniques to help international students overcome the language barriers, such as further explanation of slang or an outline of key concepts of a lecture. - Involve international students in classroom discussion and facilitate the discussions by providing opportunities for students to know each other before dividing them into small groups. Provide discussion topics in advance so students will be more prepared. Provide feedback, not a grade only. - Organize group-oriented activities in the international classroom. Design collaborative group activities to understand interpersonal communication better, for example, learn to pronounce students' names correctly.
Student Services	- ESL services: it is better to have a department-specific trained ESL personnel to assist graduate-level academic writing. - Orientation programs: provide more information and include more specific information about how to succeed academically.

Writing instruction. One of the biggest challenges reflected by international students is their English writing competence. Further, the faculty in the writing programs also struggled with teaching multilingual writers because they lack specialized training in this area (Schneider, 2018). Schneider (2018) offered five macro-topics related to college writing to expand writing instructors' and professionals' understanding of teaching multilingual students, which the researcher believed that was necessary for faculty with an increasing number of diverse students with different linguistic backgrounds. The first topic is the *Nature of Second Language Writers* which could help faculty understand the differences between international students and immigrant/resident ESL students. Therefore, Schneider suggested distinct paths for various types of multilingual writers in the first-year writing curriculum. The second topic is to help faculty understand the *Theories of Second Language Development* which implies that second language learning is a lifelong process. Faculty, especially the writing instructors need to understand that it takes years to achieve academic proficiency in an additional language. The third topic is *Assignment Design and Teacher Response,* which suggests that writing assignments for L2 learners should be different from L1 students. Meanwhile, multilingual students benefited from instructors' explicit, constructive, and responsive feedback on their writing, especially in language and grammar. The fourth topic talked about *Grammar* which Schneider (2018) believed that "teachers absolutely must have solid knowledge of descriptive grammar in order to make well- founded pedagogic choices in relation

to multilingual students — or any other students" (p. 361). Hence, he recommended writing instructors to get equipped with descriptive linguistics as well as pedagogical grammar knowledge. The last topic Schneider introduced was *Sociolinguistics,* which emphasized the connection between language and "social, political, and economic power" (p. 363). To this extent, understanding monolingualism, multilingualism, translingualism, and code-meshing in the field of writing studies is essential for teaching diverse learners.

Based on the macro-topics, Schneider (2018) outlined four suggestions that could incorporate applied linguistics to improve language learners' writing competence in higher education. One of those is to provide professional development in applied linguistics for faculty so they can integrate the knowledge to daily practices. This article was a strong argument in supporting educators to be linguistically and culturally responsive writing instructors. Regarding writing support for international students, Gallagher and Haan (2018) suggested providing a full-time writing tutor who can communicate in the students' first languages. Researchers stated that services provided by the University Writing Center were not enough to support international students, especially for those in the graduate programs, because the content of their papers could not be addressed (Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Ravichandran et al., 2017).

In sum, international students are part of the multilingual student population, and they are overwhelmed by the academic writing challenges. They need language support from their subject teachers. As stated by Haan et al. (2017), "all faculty are instructors of language in their disciplines" (p. 47). Gallagher and Haan (2018) listed some strategies that could be applied to disciplinary classes, including "focusing on language demands of the disciplinary tasks, offering opportunities for student interaction, creating a supportive classroom environment, supplementing oral and written texts, scaffolding learning, and providing feedback on both disciplinary and language content" (p. 316). The practices introduced above could inform faculty's perspectives in teaching L2 learners with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and help faculty understand and learn strategies to apply to their classroom teaching.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, researchers employed qualitative and quantitative methods to examine international education in U.S. institutions of higher education. The topics included the challenges faced by students and faculty, CLR teaching practices, faculty beliefs, and recommendations for staff and administrators. The literature indicates that international students and faculty face challenges in terms of language, culture, classroom discussion, academic expectations, as well as adjustment to each other. International students' prior educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are their funds of knowledge but also obstacles to adopt into a new learning environment. Transitioning from one culture to another, the conflicts between different systems and values cause new international students to feel confused, lost, and uncomfortable (Arthur, 2017). However, it is clearly shown that faculty's perspectives are less discussed in the literature. More research, especially large-scale empirical studies focusing on faculty's experiences are needed in the future to better understand and support the needs of those who teach international students.

From the literature review, it is obvious that faculty is seen as a vital resource for international students' development in cognition, language, social interactions, and academic performance. In a diverse classroom where students share multicultural identities, faculty's scaffolding and supportive activities could lead students through their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—"the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through

problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)—and achieve their potential. One important factor to consider in teaching international students is that it takes years of exposure for them to gain confidence when speaking a different language and participating in a new culture (Martirosyan et al., 2015). Therefore, during curriculum design and classroom teaching, instructors need to be aware that the newcomers are experiencing a long and challenging process to understand and accommodate the mainstream norms.

Also, students bring an abundance of prior knowledge to the class, which also greatly impacts their learning and understanding (Rosenblatt, 1994). Thus, it is beneficial for faculty to understand students' cultural and language backgrounds during curriculum planning and instruction delivery. Rather than judging all students' performances with the same standards, neglecting students' diverse backgrounds, and marginalizing the international students because of their special needs, it is vital to take them into consideration during classroom instruction. To achieve the goals, researchers recommended professional development and various CLR practices for faculty to support multilingual and multicultural students. The suggestions covered teachers' beliefs, building social connections, program design, classroom practices, and writing instruction. In general, the suggestions will likely benefit both faculty and students. However, most of the literature had small sample sizes or were conducted in one university. Some suggestions were from faculty's own experiences of working with international students. Therefore, the practices may not fit into other institutions. Another finding from the literature is that there is a lack of clarity about roles of supporting international students. The international offices at some universities provide immigration information. Their primary goal is to make sure that the international students obey U.S. laws and regulations. The faculty's primary responsibility focuses on serving local students and the community. An executive order like International Initiatives is not motivated enough to promote a change in their curriculum and teaching if faculty's needs, working load, and expectations are not considered. The criteria of evaluating international education were too vague as well. Therefore, future research needs to investigate international students' feedback towards these practices and compare their academic performances between groups with and without CLR support.

It is also necessary to examine the issue from a critical stance and see how power and people's mindsets impact their practices. On one hand, faculty held a positive attitude towards diversity, globalization, internationalization, and international students on campus. On the other hand, without appropriate training, faculty's monolingualist beliefs and the perception of superiority of Western values may leave few spaces for equal intercultural communication. Nonetheless, researchers found a significant relationship between faculty background and their beliefs about international students. Compared to English monolingual faculty, faculty who have similar experiences to international students, such as studying abroad and speaking more than one language, were able to understand and empathize with them better (Jin & Schneider, 2019). It is clear that faculty were expecting more support from other departments, such as the international office, writing centers, and graduate offices. However, these services provided by U.S. higher institutions would be superficial to meet international students' linguistic and cultural differences if they mainly focus on serving domestic students. Hoekje and Stevens (2018) believed that it is necessary to challenge the belief that "U.S. higher education can continue to open its doors to the world's students without changing anything beyond the obvious student services" (p. 12), because it takes efforts from administrators, faculty, and cultural gatekeepers to create a linguistically and

culturally diverse environment that could lead to a transformation of the campus ecosystem under the initiative of internationalization.

To sum up, the literature review aims to challenge the normativity of the value of international education and international students by examining CLR practices to support international students and faculty holistically in the U.S. higher education. Since "power is involved in the determination of what will or should be learned and in how that learning will be supported and measured" (Esmonde & Booker, 2017, p. 168), it is crucial to consider if current policy, system, curriculum design, and assessment standards have taken account of international students and faculty's needs. In general, there is much more to do to build up a truly international, intercultural, and diverse environment for students, especially international students who brought their linguistic and cultural experiences to the host country but were not valued. International students should be supported at an institutional level not only because of their rights but also their contributions to the hosting institutions and local economy (Martirosyan et al., 2019). As stated by Arthur (2017), "an absence of content about international perspectives, misinformed, or stereotypical interpretations of international practices may perpetuate bias and historical biases of colonialism and racism, at minimum resulting in student disinterest or dissatisfaction with the quality of their educational experiences" (p. 888). This is a call for attention to unfold the beliefs and practices of international education in the U.S. higher education. With the efforts from faculty, staff, scholars, and students from multiple cultures, we can build linguistic and culturally diverse spaces in academia that could benefit all.

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Appendix Table

Literature Collected and Analyzed

No.	Literature	Research Type	Method	Participants	Location	*Benefits*	*Challenges*	*Faculty Views*	*Suggested Practices*
1	Arthur (2017)	Commentary	N/A	N/A	N/A		*		*
2	Crose (2011)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	*		*
3	Gautam et al. (2016)	Empirical	Online survey and interview	28 survey respondents and 6 interviewees (international students)	A U.S. university in a small town in the southern region	*	*		*
4	Gallagher & Haan (2018)	Empirical	Surveys	197 faculty	Mid-size comprehensive university in midwestern United States	*	*	*	*
5	Gopal (2011)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A	N/A				*
6	Han et al. (2014)	Empirical	Collaborative self-study	7 teacher educators	College of Education at the University of South Florida			*	*
7	Haan et al. (2017)	Empirical	Self-reported online survey (12 Likert items and open-ended items)	192 respondents (among over 500 full-time and adjunct faculty)	Mid-size, private, comprehensive university in the U.S.	*	*	*	*
8	Heng (2018)	Empirical	Demographic questionnaire, 3 semi-structured interviews, and 4	18 Chinese undergraduates	Three private, four-year, liberal arts colleges in a large city in		*		

			journal entries throughout an academic year		North East USA				
9	Jin & Schneider (2019)	Empirical	Online survey	261 respondents (full-time and part-time faculty)	A comprehensive private university in the Midwest U.S.		*	*	
10	Kaya (2020)	Empirical	Interviews	5 international graduate students	A midwestern U.S. university	*	*	*	*
11	Kisch (2014)	Commentary	N/A	N/A	N/A		*	*	*
12	Lin & Scherz (2014)	Empirical	Interviews	5 Asian international graduate students	A Medium-sized university in the Northwest of the United States		*		*
13	Martirosyan et al. (2015)	Empirical	Self-reported questionnaire	59 international undergraduate students	4-year university in north central Louisiana	*	*		
14	Martirosyan et al. (2019)	Exploratory	Analyze website content	Top 20 universities with greatest enrollment of international students in 2016	United States	*	*		*
15	Ravichandran et al. (2017)	Empirical	Semi-structured interviews	15 international graduate students	United States	*	*	*	*
16	Roy (2013)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A	United States		*		*
17	Schneider (2018)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A	United States		*		*
18	Shane et al. (2020)	Descriptive	Discuss a required first-term foundation	An 11-week course	A small, private institution in Southern	*	*		*

No.								
			course for international graduate students	California				
19	Tung (2016)	Conceptual	Literature review	Chinese students	U.S. higher education	*	*		*
20	Washburn & Hargis (2017)	Empirical	Interviews	9 faculty	3 higher institutions in the Western U.S.		*	*	*
21	Wu et al. (2015)	Empirical	Interviews	10 international students	Southernmost part of the U.S.	*	*		*
No.	**21**					**11**	**19**	**8**	**18**

Note. Benefits = Benefits/value of embracing international students; *Challenges* = International students' challenges; *Faculty Views* = Faculty's views on international students and CRT/CLR/LRI practices; *Suggested Practices* = Suggested CLR/CLR/LRI practices

Engaging the Neighborhood: English Learning and Peace-Focused Service in a Multilingual Community

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Abstract

Community-based organizations are a vital source of English language acquisition and community involvement for adult immigrants and refugee populations in the United States. By employing a framework of peace-oriented service-learning, educators can simultaneously develop English language skills while nourishing and sustaining students' agency and empathy in localized civic engagement. This article provides practices and perspectives for educators and administrators to create a curriculum that promotes a Language for Peace Approach framework coupled with a service-learning framework to establish and advance a civically engaged community.

Keywords

immigrant education, civic engagement, Language for Peace Approach (LPA), Service-Learning

Introduction

How can students, teachers, and community members work co-intentionally and collaboratively to create and sustain a civically engaged community? This article outlines a curriculum design for an adult English course titled Multilingual Community Peace Leaders (MCPL), providing pedagogical frameworks and teaching activities to develop students' civic involvement. The purpose of the MCPL curriculum is twofold: Firstly, the course facilitates community involvement by incorporating service-learning and Language for Peace Approach frameworks into a class as a means for students to develop localized civic engagement while simultaneously increasing students' agency and empathy. Secondly, the course aims to strengthen and develop English language skills alongside other spoken languages for multilingual students at community-based schools and organizations.

In this instructional design, I will begin by reviewing the literature regarding several supportive foundational frameworks for the MCPL curriculum. I will provide an overview of the contexts for where an MCPL curriculum could be relevant in adult civic engagement or ELL classes. An outline for conducting a needs assessment with potential civic partnerships will follow. Finally, examples of suggested activities created from the foundational frameworks will give the reader ideas for incorporating civic engagement into their classroom.

Curriculum Frameworks

Critical Pedagogy and Language for Peace Approach (LPA) frameworks serve as a foundational base to shape the goals and vision of the MCPL curriculum. Emerging from these concepts is an

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emphasis on Service-Learning education. Finally, the multilingual students enrolled in the class will improve their English skills through a pedagogy that validates and emphasizes translanguaging in the classroom.

Critical Pedagogy

In Freire's (1969/2018) seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* the Brazilian activist and educator argued that liberation for marginalized groups can occur through communal education. A framework of "critical pedagogy encourage[s] students to identify inequalities in society and redefine their role in changing society" (Yep, 2014, p. 51) and allows students to think critically about the Englishes (both spoken or written) that they interact with, raising the learner's awareness of their environment and allowing for liberation from oppressive political and cultural ideologies (Sichula, 2018). By bringing a critical pedagogy into a communal classroom, students can engage in a critical examination of societal injustices that immigrants or non-standard English speakers experience. This engagement can allow students to recognize that their marginalization is not absolute but rather that they have the agency to liberate themselves through transformative work (Freire, 1969/2018).

Collaborative education is predominant in critical pedagogy, which states that both teachers and students are responsible for practicing co-intentional education and unveiling knowledge in a discerning and critical fashion (Freire, 1969/2018). With students, teachers, and civic partners working in tandem, communal education can take form both in classrooms and in the daily lives of the participants, transforming relationships and communities (Waterman, 2009).

Transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) emerged from a critical pedagogy framework to capture the need for personal and internal change. Mezirow (1997) declares that transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference—that is, as adults adjust their cognitive and emotive habits of mind and points of view to new thoughts, they are undergoing transformative learning. This shift in frames of reference occurs when individuals critically reflect on the assumptions upon which "interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind, or points of view are based" (p. 7).

Mezirow (1997) also argued that a core feature of civic engagement was the development of "thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent" (p. 7). In discussing the role of the educator in the classroom, Mezirow stresses the importance of developing both short- and long-term goals. Short-term goals tend to be at the forefront of a student's agenda (e.g., graduate from this course, teach my child how to read in English, improve English pronunciation). However, long-term goals, such as nurturing critical thought or improved socio-civic engagement, are also tantamount and should be balanced alongside the short-term goals.

Theater of the oppressed. One way to stimulate the development of agency and critical empathy in the classroom is by including theatrical exercises that encourage collaborative relationships and critical reflections. Heavily influenced by the work of Freire, Boal's (1974) *Theater of the Oppressed* focused on a collaborative critical pedagogy in the public sphere by using theater activities. Boal's theatrical framework sought to transform the spectator of drama from a passive to an active participant. By placing the viewer into the creation and production of theater, Boal's goal was to provide an active viewer with the tools necessary to act against marginalization in their own lives, believing that, "theater is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theater can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it" (p. xxxi). By encouraging agency through active participatory theater, the student and teacher can link performative theater exercises in the classroom with both short-term goals

(e.g., expanding writing techniques while working on scripts or pronunciation while developing dialogue) and long-term goals (e.g., developing social empathy while engaging with scripts that may focus on controversial storylines) while also explicitly addressing localized issues through the lens of critical pedagogy.

Language for Peace Approach
A curriculum that draws heavily from a Language for Peace Approach (LPA) is another way to bring transformative peacebuilding strategies into a civically engaged classroom. First theorized by Oxford (2013), LPA's purpose is to foster peace understanding and peaceful communication through peace language activities, peace-oriented art, multi-method research designs, and peace-coded linguistic analysis (Oxford et al., 2020). The transformative essence of peace in promoting harmony, equality, justice, and agency within and among individuals, communities, nation-states, and the earth is employed to uproot the direct, structural, and cultural violence prevalent in societies (Galtung, 1969, 1990).

A classroom dedicated to peacebuilding allows for a space where individuals can create a culture of peace. Students can move toward transformative change by developing awareness about managing conflict without resorting to violence and establishing practices that create dignity and secure rights for the community (Jakar & Milofsky, 2016). While Oxford (2013) outlines six strategies for peacebuilding (peace through military strength, peace through justice, peace through politics, peace through sustainability, peace education, and peace through transformation), classroom educators can approach peacebuilding through the route of peace education and peace through transformation. Peace educators focus on identifying and advocating for peaceful policies, guiding students on how to manage conflict non-violently, and challenging systematic violence and oppression in societies. To increase peacebuilding through transformation is to respond to "violence, injustice, and inequality with nonviolent action" (Oxford, 2013, p. 43).

To foster peace understanding the LPA framework calls for the incorporation of peace-oriented art to develop peace values and to consider creative ways to uproot violence in its many forms. Oxford (2013) and Oxford et al. (2020) describe innovative techniques to increase students' awareness of peace through critical discourse analysis, peace poetry, visual imagery, peace journalism, and body movement. By employing creativity and empathy through art, students can approach issues of marginalization in their lives with creative solutions.

Service-Learning
Service-learning components of education have a long history of use in higher education classrooms across the country. While many different types of service-learning education exist, generally speaking, service-learning components consist of students spending time outside of the classroom working on neighborhood projects where they devote energy to serving community partners' needs (Tinkler et al., 2014). In the language classroom, service-learning projects have been found beneficial in increasing students' English skills in an EFL setting (Suwaed, 2018), improving self-awareness and adhesion of multicultural identity within immigrant youths (Knight & Watson, 2014), and raising students' confidence in communicative language practice in an Intensive English Program (Douglas, 2017). Despite the varied research on service-learning in the past 20 years (Salam et al., 2019), and perhaps because of the many varied types of service-learning programs, substantial confusion still exists over what exactly service-learning entails.

Service-learning differs from community service in a couple of distinct ways. Furco and Billig (2001) highlight the distinction between the two, emphasizing that community service is

often considered to be acts of altruistic kindness carried out by elite individuals to benefit their communities. On the other side of the spectrum, the authors emphasize the notion that community service is often stereotyped as something that convicts or juvenile delinquents perform to satisfy a government-mandated sentence. Therefore, service-learning advocates follow a rigid set of parameters to lend credibility to their courses (Suwaed, 2018).

For example, Furco and Billig (2001) discuss how service-learning programs tend to have clear learning objectives, student agency in selecting an organization for collaboration, a solid theoretical framework, integration with an academic curriculum, and the opportunity for reflection. Recent use of service-learning as a tool has started to take root in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classrooms, particularly in Intensive English Programs (IEP) for students matriculating into higher education, where it is presented as a beneficial addition to IEP classrooms (Douglas, 2017). Outside of higher education, recent arguments have been made for service-learning elements to be incorporated into adult education as it increases the development of problem-solving skills and critical thinking in students' additional languages while also creating reciprocal, authentic relationships in a space that is conducive to socialization and language acquisition (Riley & Douglas, 2016; Schneider, 2019). Meanwhile, some critics of service-learning argue that Service-Learning classes focus to strongly on student outcomes and meeting classroom goals and not on long-term community impact and sustainment (Burth, 2016).

Unfortunately, there is a significant gap in civic engagement or service-learning classes for adult ELL immigrants throughout the United States (Wurr, 2018). When service-learning programs occur in the ELL classrooms, ELL students are the focus of service-learning projects with L1 English speakers performing the service of working with ELL students, creating a "native"/"non-native" English speaker power dynamic. Very rarely are ELLs in the position of "serving" during service-learning experiences but rather are the "served". To that end, the service-learning that the teachers, community partners, and students undertake should strive to be decolonized (Santiago-Ortiz, 2019). Stakeholders should interrogate the power and privilege that can be present in service-learning environments to create a holistic, transformational, and peace-oriented curriculum that reframes student-teacher-community power dynamics. When coupling service-learning with a framework of critical pedagogy ELL students can take pro-active roles in service-learning programs helping to disrupt a power imbalance. By ushering in a critical examination of political and cultural ideologies in the civic realm, the students have the power to make both the classroom and the service-learning locations spaces for equitable transformation.

Translanguaging

As this is a multilingual classroom, a framework of translanguaging will be fundamental to the curriculum design. Translanguaging, first coined by Welsh linguist Cen Williams (Vogel & García, 2017), is a pedagogical practice where students are encouraged to alternate between multiple languages in their repertoire. Translanguaging allows students the agency to communicate using a complete set of linguistic features that are not fixed to "the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national or state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281). Further explored by García et al. (2017), the act of translanguaging also provides students additional resources to secure their voice in organizations that are dominated by monolingual language policies and ideologies by giving space for students' complex linguistic repertoire and personal identities.

English has a long and troubled history as a form of colonization. The forced acquisition of the English language and Western-style education has uprooted and destroyed various diverse

languages and cultures (Coelho & Henze, 2014; Sichula, 2018). "Named languages" (such as English, Kazakh, Spanish, or Basque) are social constructs arranged and maintained through political or social entities. By developing a critical awareness of what constitutes a named language and by encouraging students to bend the rigid barriers created by named languages, students can develop ownership of how they communicate their ideas and feelings (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281).

Students should be encouraged to employ their multiple languages collectively to scaffold their English acquisition. By using a translanguaging framework, the students are "emancipated from many negative ideas about bilinguals and bilingualism in the first half of the 20th century" (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 642) that are still prevalent in society today. Encouraging translanguaging helps protect and promote minoritized languages (Yilmaz, 2021) while also allowing for deeper academic participation and syntactic transfer (Dougherty, 2021). As multilingual students interact and collaborate with collective knowledge-building (Duarte, 2019), they can use their realities as a basis for development, allowing a reconstructing of their history and culture in tandem with the creation of a new culture (Rivera, 1999).

Context
The concepts laid out in this curriculum design are adjustable for adult language learners in various settings. The first focus of MCPL is to develop immigrant students' relationships with their neighborhoods and communities. This engagement could occur in adult education schools or immigrant-focused non-profits in high-density urban areas, or likewise, in organizations and institutions in mid-size cities, small towns, or rural villages. The secondary focus of MCPL is to increase students' targeted English language goals.

Common at many adult English schools are students that have diverse language capabilities and are English users of varying degrees of proficiency. An MCPL curriculum is adaptable to courses containing students with low, intermediate, or high English skills. The collective students do not need to be from a monolingual background or share a common language within the class. English classes composed of multilingual and multicultural groups should be inclusive to immigrants, refugees, migrants, or second-generation immigrants. By implementing the targeted language goals of an educational site, or incorporating learning objectives of the students through a needs assessment, educators of the MCPL curriculum can tailor the foundational frameworks and teaching activities of the MCPL to help students meet learning objectives.

Needs Assessment
To incorporate the MCPL curriculum into a community, a needs assessment of the various stakeholders involved will need to be implemented. First, an examination of the adult school or organization needs to be completed. Meet with the administration and discuss the resources available to implement a service-learning class at their organization. It is important to understand the school's educational goals to determine how a service-learning class can be adjusted to meet the needs of the school. Many U.S. colleges have toolkits that can be adapted to the adult ELL classroom to guide the teacher in implementing a service-learning course. For additional guidance, I recommend: [Boston University's Center for Teaching and Learning Service-Learning: A Guide](#) (Cordner, n.d.) Additionally, if the organization cannot accommodate a stand-alone MCPL class, the following activities in the next section can be adapted to general English classrooms to increase civic engagement and as a creative approach to language learning.

Since the MCPL curriculum allows students to be co-leaders and co-educators in their classroom, it is essential to conduct a needs assessment of the students who will be in the class. What is it that students hope to discover about themselves and their community during the course? Which language skills would students like to improve? What fears or anxieties may they have during a service-learning class? Consider other potential questions that may arise while discussing the MCPL curriculum with students.

In a partnership between the school and a civic institution it is equally important that the partner organizations' needs are being addressed and met. Partner organizations may have many different reasons for participating in a relationship; however, common reasons include feeling that it is part of their organization's mission to mentor students, helping produce future non-profit/civic professionals, and satisfying short-term needs through extra staffing (Stoecker et al., 2009). To have a successful collaboration the partner organizations needs to be informed about the goals of the class and the student. Communication is one of the most important aspects of a community partnership. Other key elements, according to Tinkler et al. (2014), include:

1. Be attentive to the community partner's mission and vision.
2. Understand the human dimension of the community partner's work.
3. Be mindful of the community partner's resources.
4. Accept and share the responsibility for inefficiencies.
5. Consider the legacy of the partnership.
6. Regard process as important. (p. 141)

The civic engagement component of the course will have students engaging with various organizations in their community that have a strong vision for meeting community needs or shaping local policy. Organizations should be chosen due to their mission of advancing and advocating for their local community and should represent the many different forms of civic institutions. Examples of organizations where students can be partners are food banks and resource centers; art museums and local theaters; mosques, synagogues, and churches; libraries; NGOs; public health organizations; or environmental non-profits.

Structure of Curriculum
The Multilingual Community Peace Leader curriculum incorporates data from the needs assessment and the pedagogical frameworks to create a holistic course focused on collaborative education. The curriculum comprises of three units that contain critical reflection, communal education, and civic engagement. In unit one, the students and the teacher, together as co-educators, will learn about different civic organizations in their community and the role of individuals in civic life. In unit two, they will spend time working at different organizations, with self-reflection being a key component of their in-class work. Lastly, in unit three, the students will think about their future roles in the city and what type of changes they want to witness in their lives and the lives of their neighbors. Within these three units, students will be encouraged to become transformational agents of change in their neighborhoods and communities through a curriculum built from the frameworks of critical pedagogy, language for peace approach, and service-learning. For a more general overview of the Multilingual Community Peace Leader curriculum, as well as sample lesson plans, visit here.

Overview of Curriculum Activities

In creating a curriculum centered around critical pedagogy, LPA, and translanguaging, it is vital to have activities that support and deepen students' critical thought and peace understanding. By incorporating LPA activities into a service-learning classroom, students will think critically about localized violence within the community. Furthermore, the LPA advocates for communicative practices that encourage critical and creative problem-solving in a safe and cohesive environment (Rothman & Sanderson, 2018). A bottom-up approach to creating and analyzing peace indicators in local communities will help participants take stock of their neighborhoods and become successful agents of transformational peace (Mac Ginty, 2013).

The process of introducing community-based service-learning projects into the classroom can serve as a resource for broadening students' points of view and counteracting preconceived thoughts leading to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). Students will have many opportunities to improve and reflect on their short- and long-term goals throughout the course. For instance, in unit two, as the students work on a biographical article of a person at their community site, teachers can guide students in improving writing skills, which can satisfy students' short-term goals in English development while also meeting long-term goals of more substantial civic engagement.

When the students are at their service-learning locations, they could be called upon to utilize their multilingual language skills to engage with the community. The linguistic features, (lexicon, register, cadence), will differ when talking to a monolingual English speaker in an office versus a neighbor with the same linguistic background versus their local shop cashier. Translanguaging allows them to pull the specific linguistic features they need, from a myriad of languages, to achieve their communication goal. Through pre- and post-service activities, teachers can work with students to create communicative links between their multiple languages that are brought into the service-learning site (see Table 1 in Dougherty, 2021) for ways to infuse translanguaging into the general content of a lesson plan).

While teaching a class that incorporates translanguaging, key resources and lessons could be in English; however, students should be encouraged to strengthen cognitive and emotive skills in all their languages. Teaching lessons in additional languages, focusing on overlapping linguistic features in multiple languages, and allowing students to express themselves in a deviation from standardized English are ways a teacher can promote peace linguistics in their classroom. In advocating for and allowing translanguaging in the classroom, "one can imagine a positive peace through language, one that can be achieved by long-range respect for and maintenance of linguistic rights, the ecology of languages, cultural and linguistic diversity, and language education" (Friedrich, 2007, pp. 74–75). Through a joint use of critical pedagogy and multilingualism, students can produce new forms of knowledge accessible to themselves and their community.

The following examples of activities are created using LPA, translanguaging, and critical pedagogy while also keeping in mind adaptability to different art teaching contexts and needs assessments. These activities encourage personal and collective agency while also increasing English capabilities through in-class exercises and service-learning projects. Lastly, like a ripple, they are designed to encourage peace to oneself, one's family, one's community, and one's environment.

Examples of Curriculum Activities

Service-Learning Sites
A significant component of the course are service-learning sites where students can develop a broader understanding of the multi-faceted elements of civic life. Organizations such as non-profits, food banks, resource centers, religious institutions, libraries, art institutions, and government agencies are excellent sites for student placement. Allow for a partnership that lasts several weeks to promote interpersonal community-building (Tinkler et al., 2014). After creating clear guidelines and community expectations, incorporate self-reflective exercises to guide students' service-learning experiences. See below for activities that include reflective practices or visit Kansas University Center for Service Learning Community Engagement Toolbox (2022) for an adaptable guide to implementing reflective practices in the classroom.

Everyday Peace Indicators
During unit one, conduct alongside students an analysis of peace indicators in your neighborhood or community by using the research outlined in Mac Ginty (2013). Through group work, have students consider what elements in their neighborhoods indicate a peaceful community. This exercise could be a simple in-class discussion, or students could be encouraged to do field research in their neighborhoods. Use the collecting and analyzing of data as a jumping-off point to consider what the community values and how the city may be marginalizing individuals or communities. For example, ask your students if these indicators change from neighborhood to neighborhood in your city, and if they do, what might be some reasons for that change? This activity will develop students' critical empathy of their community and help them name aspects of direct, cultural, or structural violence in their communities.

Reflection Journal
Students can write a reflection journal during the three units about their role in the community and their plans for civic engagement. The reflection journal can be composed of individual and collective entries that address prompts centered around civic engagement. Instead of writing, students can also answer prompts via voice or video recorder if desired or can even be encouraged to answer via multimedia collages, drawings, or photography (Oxford, 2013). Students can reflect in multiple languages, encouraging the translanguaging aspect of the curriculum and providing a space for linguistic justice. By reflecting, not only will students work on language development, but students can also consider the dynamics of service-learning.

Biographical Article
Students can choose an individual in the organization to interview at their service-learning site. The focus of the interview could be a biographical article on the individual and their choice to work in a civic role. Partner with a local community newspaper or news website to publish the interviews and raise awareness about important individuals and institutions in their neighborhoods, while simultaneously increasing the bond between student, teacher, and the community as co-educators. A sample lesson plan that introduces a biographical article activity can be found here.

Community Panel
Consider hosting a panel with community members centered around a specific theme relevant to your students. Have students participate, ask questions, and discuss their personal histories with

prominent community members. For example, by hosting a community panel focused on gender inequality, community members (such as domestic violence responders, female government leaders, and local business leaders) can discuss wage discrepancy, domestic violence, or legal protection for Lesbian, Bisexual, or Trans individuals. Multinational students should feel encouraged to share differences in gender inequality in past locales where they lived compared to their current residence, allowing for fresh and differing perspectives. By hosting a panel of community members, the students will be able to learn more and discuss specific topics and become connected to new individuals and agencies in their community.

Theater Activities

Self-reflective monologues. To develop students' critical opinions on specific topics participants can be given the same prompt and asked to write a monologue. Open-ended prompts such as, "How have you changed in the last five years," "Write a letter to your teenage self," or "What do I want most in life?" work well. Afterward, participants compile their monologues and, after coding them for similar themes, can shape and combine the monologues together in a process similar to documentary theater. While doing so, the participants cultivate self-reflective practices and simultaneously understand the multidimensional relationship between inner peace and interpersonal peace. For a deeper look at verbatim/documentary theater and additional resources, visit [Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators: Verbatim Theater](#) (n.d.).

Participatory theater. Adapted from Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* (1979), participants will choose a prevalent issue in their community. Small groups will write and create a scene about the issue and how it could or could not be solved. They will present the scene to the rest of the group once. Then, they will perform the scene again, but this time, the spectators can pause and enter the scene with their own version of how to resolve the issue. This activity encourages agency and critical problem solving, could stimulate translanguaging, and would allow for full integration of comprehension skills to meet students' targeted language goals. For additional information, a detailed sample lesson plan can be viewed [here](#).

On the street interview. Students can interview individuals in their community about a particular localized issue, such as new housing developments, increased fare rates, or pollution from local infrastructure. After interviewing the community, students can create dialogue from the interviews to highlight the multiple sides of the issue. After completing a script, students can take turns acting out different points of view. Following this, students can reflect on different solutions for each person's viewpoint. This activity encourages peaceful solutions to disrupting patterns of cultural or structural violence while allowing students to consider long-term goals for their community.

Environmental field trip. The class can reflect on their relationship with the earth and the natural or urban environment around them by going on an environmental field trip. The students, in small groups, will reflect on their relationship with well-known landmarks or neighborhoods. Each group will then write a scene placed in a different setting around the community. Then the class can visit each location (a park, a river, an alleyway, a prominent landmark, the public market) and present their scene to the rest of the group (and, perhaps, curious onlookers) at that location. Connecting person to place expands the element of peace into the neighborhood and can highlight the intersectionality of individuals with the environment around them, highlighting how the same spot can hold different values for individuals. This activity becomes a critical practice that draws upon the reflective nature of both Oxford et al.'s (2020) and Boal's (1978) frameworks.

Conclusion

In developing this instructional design, Multilingual Community Peace Leaders, I hope to present a peace-focused curriculum that encourages personal and collective agency in adult learners of English as they navigate being active members of their neighborhoods. The overarching frameworks of critical pedagogy, language for peace approach, service-learning, and translanguaging can be adjusted and formatted to serve the short- and long-term goals of students and civic institutions in various neighborhoods and municipalities throughout the United States. It is my hope that this curriculum design can improve the multilingual language skills of adult English language learners while increasing civic engagement at the local community level and allowing students, teachers, and civic partners to co-intentionally and collaboratively create and sustain a transformed neighborhood.

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Building on What We Know: Best Practices for Engaging Emergent Bilinguals in Learning

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Abstract
The purpose of this article is to describe best practices for engaging emergent bilingual students in learning. As more educators across the state of Georgia are working with emergent bilingual students, we have identified several strategies and structures that are recognized as being effective for all students and highlight ways to modify those classroom practices to benefit students who are learning English as an additional language. We describe ways to make language visible (anchor charts, word walls, sentence frames, and sentence stems), as well as effective practices for readers' workshop. We also recognize that family engagement is critical to student success and provide strategies to enhance school-family connections among culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.

Keywords
teaching strategies, emergent bilinguals, readers' workshop, family engagement

Introduction
Throughout this article we use the terms English learner and emergent bilingual interchangeably. While we recognize the term English learner is more commonly in use across the state, we also use the term *emergent bilingual* to recognize the linguistic assets of students who are learning English as an additional language in schools (García, 2009). Both terms are imprecise as *English learner* positions students only as students who are learning English without recognizing the rich language knowledge students bring to the classroom, and *emergent bilingual* indicates students are in the process of learning a second language when English could in fact be a third or fourth language. For us, both terms indicate students of a variety of English proficiency levels who use a language other than English at home. The strategies and structures presented in this article will help students learn English and also build on the linguistic and conceptual knowledge they learned prior to beginning school in the United States.

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According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021), about 10% of all public school students are considered English learners. These approximately five million students reside primarily in urban areas, but numbers in rural areas are on the rise (NCES, 2021). Although more than 75% of English learners across the country speak Spanish, there are more than 40 different languages spoken by students and their families. Georgia mirrors national statistics with about 8% of public school students receiving ESOL program services (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic are the most common languages spoken by students in Georgia with 78% speaking Spanish (Owens, 2020).

The number of English learners has been rapidly increasing over the past decade with a 61% increase between 2011 and 2019 alone (Owens, 2020; Sugarman & Geary, 2018). This creates a challenge for Georgia educators and administrators, as most educators working with English learners and their families have not had adequate education or professional development to be effective with this population (Greenberg et al., 2015). Many districts and teachers are scrambling to incorporate best practices to help their emergent bilingual learners to succeed.

The purpose of this article is to highlight ways to expand on what are widely considered as best practices for *all* students (i.e., anchor charts, sentence starters, word walls, and Reader's Workshop) to bolster the academic success of English learners. Additionally, we augment these classroom practices with best practices for engaging families and communities in the educational process, further promoting positive outcomes for these students.

Background & Context: The Authors

We are three Georgia teacher educators with vastly different experiences working with emergent bilingual students. Our backgrounds span teaching elementary, middle grades, and high school students both in and beyond the traditional classroom setting. We have each taught for over ten years and in multiple content areas. Our collective expertise is enriched by our individual experiences as educators in Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas. In addition to the diverse geographic, demographic, and political contexts of our work, we have taught emergent bilinguals across language development models. For example, we have taught in ESOL, pull-out, push-in, sheltered instruction, bilingual education, dual language, and heritage language programs.

Regardless of context or instructional model, our experiences have shown three strategies to be beneficial for emergent bilingual students: making language visual and visible, using reader's workshop, and connecting with families and communities. When utilized in tandem, these practices facilitate student success and enhance school/family/community connections. While we do provide research and best practice citations throughout, we primarily draw on our experiences working with emergent bilingual students in varied and multiple contexts to discuss these practices. We agree that the guidance below will positively impact the academic achievement of English learners in the classroom, as well as the broader educational context.

Making Language and Concepts Visual and Visible

Emergent bilinguals benefit from learning in an environment that is both language and image rich. Anchor charts, interactive vocabulary walls with pictures, and sentence frames are three strategies that support all students and can be enhanced to further support emergent bilinguals (Gibson, 2016). These are three commonly used techniques that can be leveraged to provide access to content concepts and facilitate academic language development. The sections below provide a

brief overview of each strategy and then offer opportunities for enhancing those strategies for the success of emergent bilingual students.

Anchor Charts

Anchor charts are tools used to support instruction, or "anchor" learning. They are typically created as a class so that both the teacher's and students' thinking about a concept are made visible. While teachers will want to prepare the framework for the anchor chart ahead of time, when students help with the co-construction, that chart is more relevant and meaningful, particularly for emergent bilinguals (Bacchioni & Kurstedt, 2019). In addition to collaboratively constructing anchor charts, there are several ways that they can be more relevant for English learners. Consider using a different color for important vocabulary terms and adding illustrations to make some of the text more comprehensible. The use of color helps emergent bilinguals differentiate between key terms and descriptors, and helps students identify key terms easily. Adding visual support with images, sketches, and examples provides English learners access to content concepts. While the student may not know the word for the concept in English, they might know the concept based on prior experiences. Presenting a visual helps an emergent bilingual make connections between known concepts and the English word for that concept.

We fully realize that many educators at the elementary level take full advantage of anchor charts, and we advocate for their use in middle and high schools as well. While the terms and illustrations may change, the support they offer will not only facilitate the academic success of immigrant students at the secondary level; they will also support those students who struggle with the academic language of school.

Word Walls

Word walls are commonplace in many classrooms. They are typically made up of several individual words written on sentence strips and posted in a given location in the classroom. While having vocabulary words posted and visible to students at all times is certainly better than not having them posted at all, without regularly engaging students with the Word Wall and/or providing other supports to help students access and apply the terms, the impact of a Word Wall is lessened. Here are two ways to augment the impact of Word Walls: 1) adding images and/or examples, and 2) designing classroom activities that require students to access the Word Wall or allow them to access the Word Wall for support (Jackson et al., 2017).

When images or examples are added to Word Walls, they provide the context needed for emergent bilinguals to access content concepts. Often examples are provided orally during direct instruction and class discussions, and emergent bilinguals miss out on the benefit of the example because they do not know the English words for the illustration. Consider words used in describing the water cycle (e.g., *evaporation*, *condensation*, *precipitation*, and *sublimation*). Adding a visual to represent each process will facilitate comprehension and provide clues to support use of the word wall in class activities and discussions.

Even if Word Walls feature images alongside key terms, if students are not guided in the use of Word Walls as learning tools, the existence of a Word Wall will have a limited, if any, impact on student learning and language development. It is important for teachers to design activities that require students to use words from the Word Wall. These activities do not need to be long or complex. For example, a prompt for an exit ticket could state, "Use four words from our Word Wall to describe two ideas from today's lesson." Or, after a Think-Pair-Share activity, partners could be required to include words from the Word Wall in their response or explanation.

Regularly integrating Word Wall activities, makes the Word Wall interactive, provides additional practice in the use of content terms, and reminds students that the Word Wall is there as a resource for them.

Incorporating Sentence Stems and Sentence Frames

Sentence frames and sentence starters help emergent bilingual students develop a deeper understanding of the syntax and discourse structure of academic English (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). It also supports their use of terms regularly used to express concepts and ideas such as *similar to*, *different from*, *leads to*, and *results in*. As students begin to incorporate these phrasal verbs into their writing, they will also begin to recognize them as they engage with classroom texts. These terms often signal text structure, and a student's recognition of a text's structure leads to improved comprehension. Further, using sentence frames to support English learners during writing or discussion activities helps support both their quality of writing and quality of thought (Lee, 2018).

Sentence frames can also be used to support students' understanding of content concepts. For example, building off of the terms for the water cycle above, a series of sentence frames could include: Precipitation is *similar to* condensation because they *both* _____. Precipitation is *different from* condensation because precipitation _____, *whereas* condensation _____. These sentence frames facilitate higher order thinking that will help move students beyond defining and identifying. They also enable emergent bilinguals to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts while lightening the linguistic load. Further, as students engage with increasingly complex texts, it is important to provide students scaffolded opportunities to comprehend and produce academic texts.

Using Readers' Workshops

It is imperative to provide emergent bilingual students with opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak to develop both their language skills and content knowledge. Many strategies help emergent bilinguals to acquire English while advancing their reading comprehension and writing skills. Among these strategies, we believe the most effective are modified readers' workshop approaches that incorporate interactive read alouds and guided reading.

Interactive Read Alouds and Guided Reading

Although the components of the reader's workshop model are beneficial for all students (Atwell, 2014), they are particularly helpful for emergent bilinguals. These instructional strategies include teachers modeling their thinking and developing purposeful questions, students verbalizing their thoughts through open discussions and looking for evidence to support their ideas and understanding, and small group instruction to individualize the students' learning. These elements assist emergent bilinguals to advance their English language proficiency while developing their reading comprehension skills.

Interactive Read Alouds

Reader's workshop emphasizes the importance of teaching a reading skill or a literary concept as part of the process. One of the best ways to do it is through interactive read alouds using mentor texts that model the skill or concept. When choosing a mentor text, we recommend looking for a book that fits the specific instructional purpose while being culturally relevant and engaging (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is important because students are more motivated when they relate to a story based on their own experiences and home culture. We also recommend asking students

about their preferences and interests to match these with the academic concepts to be taught. This way, learning can be more meaningful and relevant for emergent bilinguals, and thus, their language skills and concept knowledge can continue developing.

Further, before you start to read, make sure you are prepared with an initial set of open-ended questions regarding the targeted skill or literary concept; these questions will generate relevant interconnected questions from the students' perspectives. The teacher's modeling of open-ended questions will enable students to learn how to formulate relevant questions, which in turn will assist them to become independent learners. While reading aloud, we recommend clearly enunciating statements, paraphrasing as necessary teachers' questions and responses to the students' questions, and using gestures and images to contextualize words.

Once the interactive read-aloud mini-lesson of 7 to 15 minutes is finished, students will be provided with a space where they can practice the skill or analyze the concept, preferably in pairs. During this time, the teacher will provide a couple of guiding questions, and students will discuss their understanding of the skill or concept with their partners, look for evidence to support their ideas in their chosen books, and write in their reading journals.

Guided Reading
One of the strengths of this structure is that it allows for teachers to work with small groups of students while the rest of the class works in pairs or independently. During guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012, 2016) it is essential to implement a short (15 to 20 minute), well-structured lesson that targets a skill or concept. The small group format provides students with a safe and unthreatening way to practice vocabulary words, orally discuss the chosen leveled book, and develop their critical thinking skills. Intentional formation of small groups is essential for the success of guided reading. Teachers can organize students into groups based on their reading level, need to work on a specific skill, or their English proficiency level. Using leveled texts allows the teacher to work with small groups of students at a level that promotes learning and supports student success.

After finishing the guided reading groups, move back to whole class instruction and open a discussion by asking students to share their findings regarding the guiding questions and target skill or concept. This final activity will offer students opportunities to learn from each other and to advance their oral language skills. Taken together, this process will provide emergent bilinguals with several opportunities to learn a skill or concept, practice their vocabulary, and advance their discursive and oral language skills. Thus, it is important to plan for well-structured lessons with purposeful strategies to help emergent bilinguals advance their English language skills and concept knowledge.

Connecting with Families and Communities
While specialized instruction is crucial for academic success for emergent bilingual students, it is not always enough. As educators, we know what research shows: students and schools benefit from parental/family involvement (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Student from culturally and linguistically minoritized backgrounds (e.g., students of color, emergent bilinguals, and those from immigrant families), as well as students living in poverty, historically have lower rates of traditional parental involvement than students from middle-class, English-speaking, majority backgrounds (Andrews, 2013; Marschall et al., 2012; Palomin, 2020; Zarate, 2007). Knowing that, it can be difficult to determine how best to get parents and families involved in school activities and academics. First, it is important to determine what positive family engagement should look

like in your specific teaching context. Next, potential barriers to that ideal engagement need to be identified. Finally, we need to find appropriate ways to overcome these barriers to maximize accessibility for families to engage with school. Here, we present some real-life examples of ways we have successfully fostered family-school engagement.

Positive Family Engagement

Positive family engagement can vary widely, depending on numerous sociocultural factors. We use the term *family engagement* because it more accurately reflects the range of family participation in school-related activities than *parental involvement*, which ignores the diverse composition of families and connotes a limited view of participation (i.e., participation in in-school activities). Teachers need to make sure they are familiar with their students' backgrounds so that they have appropriate expectations for family engagement. For example, many Latino families view the family's role as a supportive one and leave the teaching to the school. This is not a sign of disengagement or disinterest, but a sign of respect; because the teacher knows what the student's academic needs are, the family's responsibility is to support the child through providing advice, encouragement, and care. Meaningful engagement may be in the form of regular contact with teachers, participation in extracurricular activities, or even sending the student to school with a good lunch. We must recognize that our students' families may view engagement differently, and we should adjust our expectations accordingly.

Identify Potential Barriers to Engagement

It is important to identify potential barriers to engagement. For example, if your school has a large percentage of working families, it may not be feasible to expect parents to volunteer in the classroom during the day. Other common obstacles to engagement with schools and activities include language barriers, communication difficulties, childcare needs, transportation issues, scheduling conflicts, cultural unfamiliarity, and not feeling welcome. Understanding the individual family situations of your students will allow you to design school engagement opportunities with accessibility in mind.

Maximize Accessibility

Maximize accessibility for family-school engagement opportunities. On average, families with lower income and less formal education tend to have lower rates of school involvement than those with higher-incomes and more formal schooling. Research (and experience), however, has demonstrated that schools that successfully carry out family partnership programs increase involvement of families with lower incomes and less formal education (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Goldsmith, & Kurpius, 2018). Additionally, teachers' family engagement practices are equally or even more important than family background factors when determining family engagement with school (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). This means that with the right approach, teachers and schools can increase family engagement, thereby improving student outcomes. After determining what positive engagement could reasonably look like, and identifying potential barriers, we must create paths for families to participate in students' schooling.

Accessibility Increases Engagement

Accessibility is an important way to increase parent engagement, and this can be achieved through careful planning and partnerships with students. I used to teach a study skills and college preparation elective course at a diverse Title I high school. In my classes, every combination of

historically marginalized identity (e.g., low-income, single-parent home, immigrant, emergent bilingual, ethnic/racial minoritized, undocumented status, etc.) was represented. Despite false dominant discourses about parents from marginalized and/or under-resourced communities not caring about their students' education, my teaching colleagues and I were able to get nearly 100% participation in our annual Family Night. We accomplished this through careful planning and partnership with the students. We considered possible obstacles to participation and eliminated as many as we could. We also involved the students in the planning and execution of the event, which provided another layer of incentive for the families to attend.

There were many ways we increased accessibility for our parents. We began by creating an evening event, increasing the likelihood that those with 9–5 jobs could attend. Recognizing that the event would conflict with dinner time, we provided food at the event. Students made invitations by hand in their home languages for their parents/guardians. These were supplemented with phone calls and email reminders from our team teachers. To address language and childcare barriers, students acted as interpreters, and one teacher supervised a childcare room. As transportation is also a barrier, carpools were arranged, and contact information was exchanged. Finally, students developed presentations for the night which enhanced parent motivation to attend. On invitations, we clearly indicated that food, student presentations, interpreters, childcare, and transportation would be provided so families knew what to expect. These supports also let parents know that their participation was important, and they felt genuinely welcomed.

Our program's Family Nights were the highlight of each year and helped create relationships between the students, their families, and the school that went beyond talking about grades or behavior. The positive impact of these events endured throughout their schooling. By keeping students' and families' needs in mind, we were able to successfully design meaningful opportunities for students, families, and teachers to interact. This built trust and opened communication, as well as encouraged pride in the students. While it may not be feasible to incorporate all the above elements into every event, this example provides a glimpse into the vast possibilities for deepening family engagement throughout the year, regardless of school context, grade level, or family background.

Conclusion

The number of emergent bilingual students across the state of Georgia is increasing and more educators are working with students who are learning English as an additional language. The purpose of this article was to highlight best practices that many educators are currently using and describe the positive outcomes their use can have in developing language and literacy among emergent bilinguals. While teacher education programs and school systems are working to provide the training and professional development needed to support linguistically diverse students, we feel it is important to remind educators of the effective strategies and structures they may already have in their "teaching toolbox". Sometimes, making small changes to instructional practice can make a big difference in providing English learners access to content concepts, developing language and literacy skills, and engaging families and communities.

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Highlighting Supportive Reading Comprehension Practices for English Language Learners in Virtual Classrooms

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Abstract
COVID-19 has, at least temporarily, reshaped the teaching and learning environment. Virtual learning classrooms have replaced physical classrooms and require teachers to think of new and creative ways to keep students motivated to learn. Understandably, these thoughts for creative teaching strategies are critical when considering changing demographics in student populations and existing linguistic barriers more commonly found in English language learners (ELLs). To this end, the purpose of this paper is to discuss how within the virtual learning environment, meaningful interactions, student motivation to learn, vocabulary instruction, the partnership model, and graphic organizers remain important factors impacting ELLs' reading comprehension. The paper culminates with implications for the professional development of teachers and school administration.

Keywords
support strategies, virtual learning, English language learners

Introduction

Many educators are finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented new social distancing practices and other preventive measures have presented many challenges for K–12 teachers, students, and parents. Particularly for English language learners (ELLs), the separation from native English-speaking students has impacted opportunities to improve reading comprehension. Virtual environments often limit opportunities for more positive support networks that ELLs might otherwise find in traditional school settings (Moser et al., 2021). Given the importance of reading comprehension for overall academic success, there is an increasing need to understand separation from peers as an important factor contributing to ELLs' reading comprehension (Zhang, 2017). A clear understanding of the nature of this shift can inform future virtual teaching and learning. This paper reviews the importance of and calls attention to how meaningful interactions, student motivation to learn, vocabulary instruction, the partnership model, and graphic organizers all have positive learning outcomes for the reading comprehension of ELLs. Moreover, while many teachers will likely continue to use strategies from

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pre-COVID traditional face-to-face classrooms, more discussions about the benefits of the utility of these strategies in a virtual classroom setting are needed.

Reading comprehension can be thought of as the product of decoding words and linguistic comprehension to make connections to what is read and already known (Goldenberg, 2013). For many ELLs, a highly caring or well-organized classroom inclusive of social interactions with their English-speaking counterparts assists with making important connections necessary for academic success (Banse & Palacios, 2018; Cummins et al., 2012). According to Banse and Palacios (2018), highly caring classrooms where students feel safe to interact with nonimmigrant students provide a context that specifically bolsters ELLs' motivation to learn and their English language arts (ELA) achievement. For example, a highly caring teacher may encourage ELLs to collaborate with English-speaking peers to advance their learning during ELA and reading comprehension assessments, resulting in higher performance. Similarly, a teacher with a well-controlled classroom may provide ELLs with the time and space they need to connect with other students in the classroom to learn ELA content deeply, creating a context in which ELL students can thrive.

Indeed, many of the reading comprehension challenges for ELLs have been exacerbated by the virtual classroom and the limited access to English speakers. Before the pandemic, research over the past 10–15 years converged on some basic understandings about reading comprehension struggles for ELLs. These reading comprehension obstacles for ELLs often included problems with academic language skills (e.g., academic vocabulary, morphology, syntax) needed to understand complex texts across content areas in school (Goldenberg, 2013) and literacy skills (Proctor et al., 2020). Unsurprisingly, for some ELLs, combating these reading comprehension obstacles involves meaningful interactions with English-speaking students.

However, with school closings and virtual classrooms, many ELLs find themselves isolated from their peers and teachers, which presents limited opportunities for peer-mediated approaches to learning. Even as schools reopen, virtual learning remains a dominant mode of instruction in many schools, with some school districts conducting alternative instructional schedules, such as alternating days of face-to-face and virtual learning (McCray & Tagami, 2021). This change in the traditional classroom setting has made it more challenging for students to stay engaged in academic tasks. Thus, teachers must be creative to engage students in the virtual classroom. As a teacher of ELLs, the first author has engaged in discussions with other teachers of ELLs who talk about the significant challenges the online environment has posed in keeping their students motivated than would be the case with in-person classes. In the first author's discussions with many teachers, it is clear that the struggle to get consistent engagement has become exhausting, and students are virtually fatigued.

In addition to lack of engagement, many ELLs face technological barriers to learning in virtual settings (e.g., lack of access to technology such as laptops, software, or high-speed Internet). To help combat technology barriers, many districts, including the district the first author serves, have provided Chromebooks and partnered with Internet service providers to ensure each student has the basics. Still, students may not be tech-literate in many cases, which has created an added dimension of instruction for which teachers are now responsible. These compounding difficulties and challenges have contributed to a loss of direct instruction on reading comprehension that these students would have gotten in the traditional education setting. When the fatigue from virtual instruction is coupled with learning a new language, learning for ELLs is compromised.

The change in modality also adds cognitive and emotional adjustment, inclusive of feelings of anxiety for far too many ELLs (Moser et al., 2021), so separation remains a concern.

Understandably, social interactions with peers remain significant to students' teaching and learning process (Cho et al., 2018), further amplifying the problematic nature of virtual learning. For ELLs, who benefit from interactions with native-English-speaking students, isolation could mean an impediment to their success (Daniel et al., 2016). Teacher recognition of ELLs' language needs and exceptionalities is important given such awareness is key to providing supports to ELLs. Understandably, ELLs with learning disabilities or different exceptionality categories will need additional aid in mastering reading comprehension and understanding (O'Connor et al., 2017).

What follows is a brief discussion about what teachers in virtual classrooms could do to address the needs of ELLs. Specific strategies to bring about positive teacher-student relationships for student motivation and vocabulary development are discussed. The use of graphic organizers, students' prior knowledge, and other strategies are also highlighted. The first author, a secondary educator, used these strategies in his classroom as effective ways of teaching and learning with ELL. These strategies should not be exclusive to teachers of ELLs but rather a routine practice among general education teachers.

Importance of Student Motivation During Virtual Instruction

Student motivation is a significant part of student learning experiences (Bagceci & Cinkara, 2013). The academic journey and potential accomplishments for students motivated to learn are more accessible and rewarding (Hwang & Duke, 2020). In fact, motivation for many students is a cornerstone of learning many of the valuable skills and strategies that will empower them academically. In terms of ELLs, motivation to learn is a critical part of working toward reading comprehension. Like most other learners, ELLs with higher intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels are more aware of and more willing to try reading comprehension strategies that they are taught. Because many of these reading strategies might include questioning to dig deeper or making inferences, motivational factors play an essential role in a student's language learning process, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Pavel, 2020). Without motivation, students are less likely to see gains in language and academic achievement, making them less likely to improve their reading comprehension. Teacher practices for improving student motivation for learning can include positive self-talk and creating a positive online environment (Jozwik et al., 2019).

For ELLs, such teaching practices can increase academic performance in reading comprehension (Bagceci & Cinkara, 2013). Improving student motivation hinges on teachers' ability to understand and build relationships with their students (Pavel, 2020). Improving bilingual students' motivation can include emphasizing positive self-talk. Positive self-talk can be done simply by scripting modeling of positive self-talk in the lesson plan, such as "I can" statements (Jozwik et al., 2019). Script talk inclusive of positive affirmations during virtual learning can change the way students view their progress and their ability to perform (Andrade, 2014). Additionally, teachers should regularly encourage students to speak positively about their skills and ability to learn new material (Pavel, 2020). Students may easily feel overwhelmed and depressed in a virtual learning environment (O'Connor et al., 2017), but teachers encouraging their students to speak positive affirmations can improve their results.

Many school districts have implemented mandatory social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction as a mandatory part of students' daily routine. This mandatory SEL instruction is an excellent time for teachers to model and require students to engage in positive affirmations. The first author conducts SEL instruction during the first 10 minutes of each class. There are synchronous virtual instructions via Zoom Mondays through Thursdays. Part of the SEL curriculum teaches students through scenarios and discussions about overcoming difficult

situations while working in an environment with positive affirmations. These discussions happen through students using their microphones and through chat messages.

The first author wants his students to operate in the growth mindset that "I can learn," "I will learn," and "I can do hard things." So as their classroom teacher, he models these positive affirmations in Zoom sessions. One of his favorite ways to engage students in these positive discussions is through an activity he calls "What I Now Know and Can Do." Using the current pandemic and the many changes and adaptations to education, he shares with students what he now knows because of the pandemic. That is, he intentionally focuses on the positives the pandemic has brought to education. He then asks students what they have learned considering the pandemic. This focus on advancements usually generates exciting discussions because students feel empowered by their new knowledge and experiences.

One method that has motivated and kept students interested in learning the content in the first author's virtual classroom is creating a positive online learning environment through rich discussions. To promote an open, supportive, and respectful online environment beyond the required discussion board, the first author creates a discussion area in the online platform where all students can introduce themselves and post their questions throughout the semester. Both students and the first author post replies and answers to the discussion board. This engagement in discussion provides a context reminiscent of the question-and-answer sessions that occur naturally in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Like face-to-face instruction, building positive relationships with students helps keep them excited and motivated to learn. Particularly in the online classroom, the first author has found maintaining a positive learning environment lets students know their teacher cares. For his ELLs, getting to know each of them individually through introductory posts and continuous discussions helps the first author identify ways to assist his ELLs and keep them motivated to learn.

Typically, the first author assigns students to smaller breakout groups within the virtual classroom and poses questions. The questions are designed to get to know the students and include questions about their academic and personal interests, including the day and month of their birth, favorite foods, music, and dance, to name a few examples. As the classroom teacher, the first author seeks opportunities to learn about his students' interests outside of school and acknowledge their perspectives about various educational, social, and political topics. The first author uses students' contributions to fuel student-to-student, student-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student dialogue and is deliberate in remembering students' responses so that he can follow up with students later. This strategy of building student motivation through establishing positive teacher-student relationships has helped the first author in his virtual classroom by showing students he cares about them as individuals. For the first author, building relationships with students is the easiest way to create a positive learning environment. He has found it is much easier to get students to work hard when there is a positive teacher-student relationship. Engaging in conversations relevant to students is a strategy that builds a nurturing environment, improves students' motivation, and invites future participation from ELLs (Pavel, 2020).

The importance of motivation cannot be overstated, and for teachers of ELLs, finding ways to spark learning is a critical part of working toward reading comprehension (Pavel, 2020). Finding ways to support, motivate, and engage ELLs through reading comprehension strategies—including linguistic diversity, vocabulary instruction, partner discussion, and graphic organizers—remains vital (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). What follows are brief discussions about how vocabulary instruction, partner discussion, and graphic organizers work to improve the reading comprehension of ELLs. For each section, strategies from the first author's classroom are shared.

Vocabulary Instruction to Support ELLs
When the goal is to improve ELLs' reading comprehension, vocabulary development is a foundational skill (Taboada & Rutherford, 2011). Vocabulary instruction is essential for all students to improve their reading comprehension ability (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). However, the long-term strategy of developing students' reading comprehension through conceptual knowledge of academic vocabulary is especially advantageous for ELLs (Taboada & Rutherford, 2011). Thus, teachers who incorporate vocabulary into their academic instruction support ELLs in remarkable ways. Far too many ELLs continue to lag in their language and vocabulary skills and acquisition (Sorenson Duncan et al., 2021). Students beginning the year with low English-word-reading skills are at a disadvantage when asked to read for understanding (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). Therefore, these students will need additional instruction in vocabulary and word reading skills for reading comprehension. Teachers of ELL students need to ensure that students understand the vocabulary used in their assigned texts.

All students need explicit vocabulary instruction, but the practice remains a highly beneficial strategy for ELLs (Taboada & Rutherford, 2011). Many researchers have acknowledged all aspects of ELL instruction should include intensive vocabulary instruction (Hall et al., 2019). Fortunately, there are many online resources students and teachers can access to help develop academic vocabulary and ultimately reading comprehension for ELLs. In many school districts, programs such as Lexia® Core5® Reading (henceforth referred to as Lexia) have been purchased to assist teachers in the teaching and learning of ELLs. Lexia is a program used as a supplemental learning tool in the first author's school district. Using Lexia, teachers assign students pretests, and the Lexia program in turn creates an individualized learning plan with modules for each student to work through individually. Lexia then provides teacher feedback and accompanying lesson options based on students' performance on topics or units. Using programs like Lexia, teachers can assign homework to help ELLs develop their vocabulary. Expectedly, these programs should not be used as a replacement for explicit instruction by the teacher (Sorenson Duncan et al., 2021). The first author often uses data generated by Lexia to drive his instruction and meet the needs of students. More specifically, the data assist teachers with assigning homework that targets students' areas for improvement and delivering one to two lessons weekly. Thus, as a supplement, programs such as Lexia, in addition to the detailed instruction teachers provide, remain beneficial for the improved reading comprehension of ELL students who receive language instruction and support.

The use of visuals to support instruction is a valuable strategy the first author uses with ELLs. Presentation tools like Google Slides, Nearpod, or Pear Deck can be used to display vocabulary words with a corresponding image. Presentation tools like these help teachers keep students engaged in learning. Google Slides makes it simple for teachers to create interactive presentations with easily shared information with students. Nearpod allows teachers to solicit students' responses to open-ended questions where students can type or draw their responses. Nearpod also allows students to work independently or collaboratively by bringing all the students together in one classroom yet affording each student their personal space where the teacher can give them personalized feedback. Nearpod also allows for peer review of student responses because students can see each other's work. As for Pear Deck, it is a fast way to transform presentations into classroom conversations. The first author typically asks students to copy definitions and draw accompanying pictures based on the vocabulary words during classroom instruction. He also uses Pear Deck to leave audio instructions, descriptions, and examples of the vocabulary for students to hear while working on the prompts for assignments. The Pear Deck Flashcard Factory helps students design and draw their vocabulary word images, which assist with

reading comprehension. The first author has found the Flashcard Factory to be transformative for how ELLs in his classroom engage with vocabulary. Flashcard Factory allows the first author to pair ELLs with native-English-speaking peers. Together, students work to create dynamic and engaging flashcards. By pairing students to collaborate, students can illustrate and define terms. This think-pair-share approach that the Flashcard Factory offers helps make learning vocabulary for ELLs an active and social experience. The Pear Deck Flashcard Factory strategy has helped the first author's students retain the vocabulary learned by creating a visual connection with the terminology and building on prior knowledge. The use of the Pear Deck Flashcard Factory adds to the general understanding that although the words might change between two languages, the images do not.

The Partner Discussion Model to Support ELLs
Unfortunately, one of the most significant disadvantages to virtual instruction is the lack of regular interactions students have with peers. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many ELLs are not receiving essential social interactions they usually get from their peers, leading to continuous loss of opportunities to improve their reading comprehension and language skills. In many ways, peer interaction helps to improve ELLs' reading comprehension and other supports in the classroom (Zano, 2020). For example, when readings of texts become complicated for ELLs to understand, the oral language or readings from their English-speaking peers could prove helpful (Sorenson Duncan et al., 2021). In a traditional classroom, these peer-to-peer interactions could be seamless, affording ELLs with opportunities to gain understanding from their peers in face-to-face interactions that might otherwise be challenging in a somewhat isolated environment such as the virtual classroom (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020).

Fortunately, there are ways for teachers to help improve this missing aspect from the online environment. Like previously mentioned approaches to motivating ELLs through discussion, the first author has found that using an instructional tool like Flipgrid has worked well to garner partner discussions. Flipgrid can be used to have students post a video response to a prompt like a discussion board. Instead of the traditional discussion boards where students use text to respond to classroom discussions, students use Flipgrid to create short video responses. The short video responses from students can be a response to an original question or a response to classmates. Within their responses, students can ask clarifying questions and share their understanding of the reading. For ELLs, the Flipgrid interaction could serve two purposes. The first is ELLs learn from other students as they discuss the course content. Second, ELLs get additional practice speaking and listening to English in the academic environment. This strategy fosters participation and enhances the quality and depth of overall discussion (Zano, 2020).

Another effective strategy teachers could utilize in virtual classrooms is breakout groups. Like traditional classroom settings, where students work together in groups, which often help ELLs understand assigned reading materials (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020), online software such as Zoom and other video conferencing applications typically allow teachers to create breakout groups. Thus, teachers in virtual classrooms can assign students to small workgroups, much like they would in a classroom environment and allow students to collaborate with their peers. Breakout rooms can be created for any part of a lesson. The first author typically has preassigned groups for initial group discussions to help students scaffold the text and flesh out the expectations of assignments and randomized groups for a post-reading activity. The breakout groups for initial discussions are based on students' reading comprehension abilities. Students are often grouped in mixed ability pairings of three to four students, which has worked well in the first author's

classroom. After the initial discussions, students return to whole-class discussions to share out. Afterward, a randomized breakout group is formed for a post-activity discussion. Students are given discussion questions as a guide during the randomized breakout room sessions for the post-reading activity. The randomized breakout room usually affords students opportunities to reflect on the lesson and make connections. Although not the traditional way of interacting with their peers, virtual small groups can help ELLs connect to assigned readings and their peers in personable ways while building on reading comprehension.

Notably, small group settings could work for any subject. So, for example, after reading a classroom assignment or course text, teachers could use the partner discussion model, in which students in the class discuss and check for reading comprehension with a partner. ELLs are sometimes hesitant to speak in a whole-class setting but are more willing to talk with a partner (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005). Working with a partner in analyzing the text allows ELLs to gain confidence in speaking about texts and can motivate them to make connections and share compelling information (Zano, 2020). ELLs' connection to assigned readings could assist with their reading comprehension and sharing during discussions. This approach is relatively easy to implement in the virtual classroom (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005).

Small groups afford ELLs opportunities to build relationships with their peers and acquire language skills they might not feel comfortable doing in a whole class setting (Cho et al., 2018). Teachers should recognize ELLs can build their reading comprehension skills and learn as much, if not more, from their peers as they can from their instructors (Sorenson Duncan et al., 2021). When teachers provide all students with open-ended questions and conversation starters, ELLs in small groups with English speakers can better read, comprehend, and discuss assignments. One advantage of the small group setting with discussion questions is other students help to facilitate language acquisition and vocabulary development, which can improve ELLs' reading comprehension (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). This partner discussion model, which is vital to reading comprehension in the traditional classroom experience, is crucial during the recent virtual learning experience.

Graphic Organizers to Support ELLs

Fortunately, like the partner discussion model, graphic organizers work well to improve the reading comprehension of ELLs both in traditional and online classrooms (Acosta, 2019). Graphic organizers can work in multiple ways to improve the reading comprehension of ELLs. For example, graphic organizers can help students to identify relationships and make connections for reading comprehension. For ELLs in particular, graphic organizers can promote their strategic reading, improve their ability to classify the content of a passage, help them locate supporting information, and enhance their ability to gain meaning or comprehend text (Praveen & Rajan, 2013). Educators of ELLs can also utilize graphic organizers as an informal assessment tool to see what information their ELLs are pulling from the text (Zano, 2020).

Many teachers already use graphic organizers as part of their instructional practices. Graphic organizers offer visuals for students to help build relationships and understanding of content. One such graphic organizer the first author often uses is a What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned (KWL) chart. KWL charts work well both in traditional and online classrooms. In the online classroom, KWL charts are particularly effective for ELLs to help them access prior knowledge and summarize their learning. Teachers could ask ELLs to use Google documents to create KWL templates both individually and collaboratively for virtual teaching and learning. Students could also be supported in creating a KWL template suitable for reading and

vocabulary content. Using the KWL chart ELLs create, teachers can engage them in learning, reviewing lessons, or help guide and support ELL students' reading comprehension.

Teachers can also create a Google Jamboard in the virtual environment where all the students collaborate to fill out the graphic organizer or chart. When using Jamboard to create graphic organizers, it is helpful to upload a picture of the graphic organizer as a background, ensuring that students cannot change or edit the graphic organizer. Teachers should encourage students to write or type information onto the graphic organizer. The first author has found that by keeping the original picture of the graphic organizer intact, students can compare and share their interpretation and comprehension of the lesson. This process of using the Jamboard is like how one uses a whiteboard or chart paper in a traditional face-to-face classroom. It allows students to work together to generate ideas.

Canva is another tool the first author uses. Teachers can use Canva to create graphic organizers in the virtual classroom. Teaching and learning with Canva are done in real-time with students. Teachers can use Canva to create interactive presentations that invite students to add to the lessons individually or as a group. Students can ask questions, leave feedback, and get support from other students. Teachers and students can also add visual content to questions and answers during lessons. Canva also allows teachers to access and use an array of content-specific templates. Teachers can scaffold the work into chunks based on the content and provide students with specific tools with the content-specific templates. The first author specifically uses Canva for scaffolding activities with students. For ELLs' reading comprehension, teachers could use Canva templates to scaffold lesson activities that include a scaffolding session during the initial discussions and breakout rooms. As teachers meet with each breakout group, they can preview the text and highlight key vocabulary terms or encourage students to chunk the text then read and discuss.

Scaffolding is a support teachers provide students as they work toward an understanding of a concept. In the first author's classroom, scaffolding works particularly well for ELLs paired with native-English-speaking peers and when the pairs are based on mixed ability. The first author has found mixed-ability pairings work best when pairing a high-performing student with a medium-high-performing student or a low-performing student with a low-medium-performing student. Understandably, when pairing students with significantly different skill sets, students may become frustrated. However, this frustration can be productive perseverance when conducted in highly caring classrooms (Banse & Palacios, 2018). Graphic organizers, pictures, and charts can all serve as scaffolding tools. The first author has found scaffolding lessons for use with graphic organizers remain a valuable strategy for helping to improve ELLs' reading comprehension because it supports students working collaboratively with their native-English-speaking peers to generate ideas and concepts.

Graphic organizers are an excellent way for students to visualize the text and read the pictures in the organizer so teachers can see where there is a lack of comprehension (Acosta, 2019). Even more, graphic organizers can be a great informal assessment tool to inform what vocabulary or background knowledge teachers may need to address and allow for the educator to understand where ELLs' reading comprehension might require support. Teachers engaging with teaching and learning within the virtual classroom can use graphic organizers in multiple ways (Zano, 2020). They can require students to complete graphic organizers as homework on specific text materials to gauge ELLs' reading comprehension. Additionally, teachers could assign the completion of graphic organizers to students as small group work. Working in small groups could help ELLs interact and learn from their peers (Praveen & Rajan, 2013). Gaining confidence from contributing

to their groups and receiving positive feedback from teachers could create a positive learning environment for ELLs and increase their motivation (Cho et al., 2018).

Conclusion

As educators around the country grapple with the new realities of educating students during a global pandemic, the complexities and stakes are most pronounced with our most at-risk student populations, such as ELLs. These new realities present clear imperatives for the professional development of teachers and school administrators. First, professional development to assist teachers in supporting ELLs' diverse learning styles and levels in an online learning environment is needed. Understandably, ELLs have varying amounts of prior knowledge of academic, technology, and reading skills. The range of prior knowledge could be underdeveloped or nonexistent depending on students' personal history (Cho et al., 2018). The variation in ELLs' knowledge, coupled with the unforeseen challenges of a pandemic and the move to virtual learning environments, has undoubtedly caused some of these students not to progress as much as they would have during traditional in-person instruction (Daniel et al., 2016).

Second, with the understanding ELLs come from various backgrounds that have influenced their reading, vocabulary, and language development, all of which affect their reading comprehension abilities (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020), school administrators will need to invest in the purchase of software that could assist with the complexities of virtual learning experiences for ELLs. There remains a challenge of verbal comprehension in the virtual environment in which many ELLs find themselves. This challenge in verbal comprehension is even more problematic for school districts that rely on live or recorded video instruction formats that place a high degree of importance on oral comprehension. This heavy reliance on oral comprehension in the virtual environment creates disadvantages for ELLs who may have less-developed verbal comprehension skills, which is also linked to reading comprehension (Sorenson Duncan et al., 2021). This conundrum about verbal language versus text highlights the need to learn more about how the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual learning have impacted ELLs' education.

Third, when teachers use multiple methods to teach ELLs, many students' reading comprehension skills increase (Acosta, 2019). Multiple methods inclusive of cognitive and practical skills (Barber et al., 2015) afford teachers of ELLs with opportunities to enhance reading comprehension. Teachers' use of multiple evidence-based strategies to improve ELLs' reading comprehension should involve strategies that address skill acquisition and language development (Acosta, 2019). For example, teachers could couple the partnership model inclusive of peer grouping and graphic organizers along with vocabulary instruction techniques to improve ELLs' reading comprehension. The more tools ELLs must use, the better their chances are for improving reading comprehension. More so, the utility of multiple teaching strategies could help teachers manage the needs of ELLs (Galloway & Uccelli, 2019). This awareness is crucial to improving students' development of other skills—enabling ELLs to improve reading comprehension and language acquisition.

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Utilizing Readers' Theatre and Role-Play to Engage Young English Language Learners

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Abstract

Students whose primary native language differs from the language taught in their school require specialized instruction and creative teaching strategies. Readers' theatre is an evidence-based practice that builds language skills in English language learners. This technique was used in a diverse kindergarten classroom to increase oral fluency and vocabulary. Social and literacy skills were also targeted. This paper examines the benefits of using role-play and specifically readers' theatre as an approach to teaching English language learners.

Keywords

language learners, readers' theatre, role-play, fluency, vocabulary, social skills, literacy skills

Background and Classroom Context

Readers' theatre was implemented in a public-school kindergarten classroom in Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose was to build language skills for English language learners (ELLs). Learners in this class included 13 students who were ELLs and 11 whose first language was English. Three students in the class had learning accommodations through an individualized education program (IEP). One student with an IEP had limited English proficiency (LEP). The students requiring language support were from Central and South American countries as well as Asian countries. Expressive and receptive language skills varied among all students. For example, a few ELLs in the class had more exposure to spoken and printed English. Most students lived in households where Spanish or Bengali were the primary spoken languages. These students had limited exposure to the English language. The approach of using readers' theatre and role-play was found to have positive benefits for the ELLs.

Rationale

Role-play is appropriate for PK–2 classrooms across the globe. This technique has been utilized in many early learning settings (Banerjee et al., 2015). Students with LEP require effective instruction to allow them to achieve the same learning standards as their peers whose native language is English. High-quality strategies are necessary for these students to access the curriculum (Gonzalez et al., 2011). According to Owens (2020), classrooms in Georgia serve the eighth-highest number of ELLs in the United States, driving home the need for this specialized instruction.

The technique of role-play can be used with many learning activities for primary students. This strategy is not exclusive to solely ELL or primary students. All learners can benefit from role-play. Villafuerte et al. (2018) implied that learners practicing language skills with role-play are

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more willing to participate in cooperative learning. The literature suggests that learning through play is an integral part of early learning development. However, in practice, teachers do not allot adequate time for play (Keleş & Kalıpçı-Söyler, 2013). Step into any primary classroom and one will find when students are presented with material that is engaging and fun, they are learning.

Oral fluency is a language goal that should be addressed with students learning a new language. Expressive language is often challenging among young learners making it more difficult with young ELLs. One effective way to ensure student success is to have a clear and posted objective in the classroom. Students need to understand what their learning target is. This is achieved by reading the objective. It is also helpful to have the students repeat or read the objective(s) as well. Upon closing the lesson, the teacher should review the learning target by giving a formative assessment. This can be done by discussing what they learned or asking students to explain what they learned on an exit ticket. Objectives should align with state or local content standards (Himmel, 2012).

Vocabulary development is considered crucial for students who are learning a second language. Hunt and Feng (2016) stated ELL students need direct instruction in vocabulary. The reading strategy of using context clues alone to determine the meaning of a word may be inappropriate for students with LEP. This is due to the high number of new words they are reading. Hunt and Feng also link vocabulary knowledge to an increase in listening and reading comprehension. Before reading occurs, a teacher may pre-teach vocabulary with a picture walk. One new word can be focused on using the Frayer model, which provides a definition, example, non-example, and picture—a method that has been shown to assist with vocabulary growth (İlter, 2015). Students need explicit vocabulary instruction, such as discussing new words as they arise during reading. After this direct instruction, teachers can provide opportunities for using the new words. Students can sing, dance, and reenact scenes to build their fluency. Multimedia is a way to increase vocabulary as well. Audio and visual clips that focus on newly learned vocabulary can be utilized to support retention (Hunt & Feng, 2016).

Social skills can be increased with the use of role-play. Social stories, often used with students with autism (Crozier & Sileo, 2005), can be utilized for students with LEP. Both types of learners have deficits in language, though students with LEP have language deficits caused by lack of exposure. Using a social story that incorporates role-play with an ELL serves to increase language skills during social interactions. This in turn will help build confidence during spontaneous interactions and boost oral fluency. One can also draw the conclusion that students with LEP who may be exhibiting behavioral deficits could benefit from this strategy as well.

Furthermore, literacy skills are targeted during role-play. This domain of learning is considered critical for ELLs as teaching and learning occurs in English. The discrepancy in achievement for students with LEP and native speakers is alarming, and the learning gap widens over time (Banerjee et al., 2015). One strategy is to use curriculum-based readers' theatre. This method can assist with fluency, retention, and comprehension. It is also a cross-curricular approach (Uribe, 2019).

Guidelines for Implementation

There is a plethora of resources for teaching ELLs using the role-play strategy. While it is crucial to investigate evidence-based practice specific to students with LEP, teachers can also consider broader resources. The *Early Childhood Education Journal* includes articles on effective pedagogy for families and teachers of young children ages birth–8 years (e.g., see Banerjee et al., 2015). Resources that emphasize strategies for students with special learning needs can be utilized for

teaching students with LEP. The two groups intersect based on their need for specialized instruction. *Teaching Exceptional Children* is a prominent journal in the field of special education that includes articles with strategies to support ELLs. This publication provides practitioner articles which break down different learning techniques to use in the classroom (e.g., see Crozier & Sileo, 2005). In addition, the [Council for Exceptional Children (2022) website](#) contains resources for ELLs and students with disabilities. The [Learning for Justice (2021) website](#) offers a specific resource guide to implementing the strategy of readers' theatre in classrooms. YouTube has videos of readers' theatre being implemented in classrooms and learning modules for professional development. Here are three such videos that stood out:

- *[First Grade Reader's Theatre: Little Red Riding Hood](#)* (Miss Sara's Class Online, 2021)
- *[Introduction to Readers' Theatre for EFL Classrooms](#)* (American English, 2018)
- *[Readers' Theatre Model Lesson](#)* (Any Given Child Sarasota, 2017)

The following is a summary of how readers' theatre was implemented in the kindergarten class mentioned at the beginning of this article. The summary below can be utilized as a step-by-step guide to use readers' theatre to increase language acquisition and proficiency among ELLs in the primary grades.

1. On Monday, students were told they would be participating in a performance by bringing a story to life. The teacher read the learning objective: "Students will be able to increase their speaking skills by acting out a story." It was explained there were four acting parts, and students would work together in pairs to practice. The teacher also told the students they would be partaking in a "theatre celebration" at the end of the week to reward their hard work. This would include popcorn, juice, and an animated movie version of the book. (The book chosen for this specific unit was *Where the Wild Things Are* [Sendak, 1963].)

2. Before reading, a picture walk was used to get students familiar with the story and make predictions. One student responded, "the little boy was not happy." Another student said, "it looks like his dream." This time was also utilized to teach unfamiliar vocabulary. The teacher used the Frayer model to dissect the word "mischief." Students came up with a definition, picture, example, and non-example.

3. The story was read aloud to students while the teacher modeled expression and fluency. She also paused to check for understanding.

4. After reading, the class did a story retell by examining the characters, setting, problem and solution. A character map was used to describe Max. Students said Max was "bossy" but had a "good imagination."

5. Students were paired and put into three groups. Each group had eight students, and partners were assigned the roles of Max and Narrators 1, 2, and 3. Students who required more support were double cast with readers who required less support. This included three students with IEPs and eight ELLs. This allowed these students to build confidence with oral fluency throughout the week.

6. The script was read aloud every day at the beginning of the reading block. This served to model pronunciation and expression. The teacher worked with each group during guided reading Monday through Thursday. Groups were provided an enlarged script to practice their speaking parts. The teacher had students highlight their lines and modeled each speaking part. The teacher read the first few words or lines, depending on the level of support, and students repeated them while reading the script. Partners choral-read their lines together. The book was utilized to give visual support and aid in comprehension. Students were asked how Max should look and feel. The teacher used formative assessment during small-group sessions to evaluate student progress. She was able to observe and help when students needed assistance with pronunciation or remembering a line. On Thursday, an oral fluency rubric was utilized to assess mastery of the learning objective. Eighty percent accuracy of the spoken words indicated mastery of the objective. Students who scored below 80% were identified so the teacher could work with them targeting these skills.

7. Students worked in literacy centers throughout the week. One center included making a crown like Max wore in the book. The other centers were comprised of a rhyme sort, character attributes match, and a sequencing activity. The paraprofessional assisted with independent group activities. When students were off task, the teacher reminded them of the theatre celebration they were going to have at the end of the week. A couple of students were allowed to take sensory breaks during work periods. The teacher also provided brain breaks for the whole class during group transitions.

8. On Friday, the room was set up to accommodate a stage-like setting. Tape on the floor marked where the actors would stand during their performance. Each group presented while the other two groups were the audience. Students who were comfortable performed their part solo while some preferred to remain partnered.

9. As an extension, students discussed if the objective was met. The teacher asked students what they did well and what could be improved. Based on their abilities, students wrote and/or drew a picture about their favorite part of the story.

Conclusion

Readers' theatre can be used to increase language proficiency in the domains of oral fluency, vocabulary development, social interactions, and literacy skills. Though developed for a specific audience of PK–2 ELL students, role-play is appropriate for learners of any age or varied abilities. Readers' theatre can also be adapted for all literature genres and content areas. The guidelines shared in this teaching technique article can help young ELLs engage in meaningful learning experiences while also increasing their language skills.

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