

The University of San Francisco

## USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

---

Doctoral Dissertations

Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects

---

2020

### Exploring the Experiences of Teachers in a Bilingual Immersion Environment

Paloma Cordova

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

University of San Francisco

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN A BILINGUAL IMMERSION  
ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

By

Paloma R. Cordova  
San Francisco  
July 2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
Dissertation Abstract

Exploring the Experiences of Teachers in a Bilingual Immersion Environment

The following qualitative study provides a theoretical analysis of teachers' experiences and interactions at a progressive Mandarin immersion school. Missing from the current literature based on immersion education are the narratives of teachers, specifically international teachers from diverse teaching backgrounds in foreign language settings. An integration of Mandarin and a progressive framework is unique and therefore illuminating their voices is vital to the field of education specifically as they contribute to the growth of prospective mandarin immersion schools in the US. This study included fifteen participants who identified the ways in which their own personal reflections as pedagogues changed over time.

This research is an examination of teachers within an immersion context, specifically the dynamics between international teachers from China and the American English teaching specialists at a Chinese Immersion school (CIM). The study itself was composed of two focus groups, semi-structured interviews, analysis of weekly newsletters, and teacher files to identify and discern each individual story. I analyzed the data, which highlighted any shift in teaching philosophies, teaching practices, pedagogy, community strengths, and challenges, along with personal growth throughout this process.

The results of this study demonstrated that the participants were able to provide examples and strategies to navigate a complex progressive and dual language environment. The teachers described approaches to dimensions of mentorship including

peripheral mentorship (environmental proximity), relevant experimental apprenticeship to design thinking, and a flexibility in multicultural spaces, including a bicultural growth mindset. This study presents a group of teachers who evolved through the challenges of limited resources and created strong community ties to initiate change in an immersion language setting.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Paloma Cordova  
Candidate

July 16, 2020  
Date

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Rosa Jimenez  
Chairperson

July 30, 2020

Dr. Ursula Aldana

July 16, 2020

Dr. Emma Fuentes

July 16, 2020

## DEDICATION

“No hay mal que por bien no venga.”

I would like to dedicate this work to my father, Ralph Cordova. He passed away suddenly in October 2019 when I was in the throes of dissertation writing. He was my champion and cheerleader into this academic endeavor. He would often introduce me as, “My Scholar.” My Dad encouraged me to pursue higher education emphasizing the importance of academic scholarship especially for women who looked like me. He was the first to introduce me to notable educational reformist such as Paolo Freire, Diane Ravich, Bell Hooks, Johnathan Kozol, and his favorite, Father Gregory Boyle and more. He was interested in my future to change the lives of the people around me by living honestly and lifting voices of those in my community. Thank you for telling me to “get it done, kid!” and for believing in me. In addition, I would also like to acknowledge my entire family and friends for inquiring about my studies and for your encouragement. Thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past five years and a half, I have worked alongside many professors, colleagues, and supporters through this dissertation journey. Prior to attending USF, I was longing for change to grow both professionally and academically. Through this challenging endeavor, I realize that transformation is embedded in the constant ebb and flow of life and it is what you do with the change that is actually most critical in our brief time on this earth.

First, I would like to express my appreciations to the USF professors who guided me through rigorous academic study. I would like to acknowledge my Chair, Dr. Rosa Jimenez who supported me and guided me with patience and understanding. Through your loving discernment, you were able to provide me with the time and space I needed to grow throughout this dissertation journey. We were the perfect match for so many reasons. I am and will be forever grateful. To add, I would like to give gratitude to my committee, and professors, Dr. Emma Fuentes and Dr. Ursula Aldana. Thank you for your support and facilitating our classes with an attentive ear and soulful wisdom. I send all of my appreciations to my IME peers who were significant leaders and teachers for me throughout this educational journey.

I would also like to thank the educators who shared their stories and anecdotes. This work would not have come to fruition had not been for the gracious participants of this study. Thank you for trusting me with your words and taking the time to speak with me about your roles as educators. You are essential. Thank you, Sophia and Daniel, my editors and careful eyes. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Michael. Thank you for being patient with me and dedicating a shared life with me knowing that my studies

would come first through the earliest stages of our relationship. I could not have done this without you. Thank you for your love, your endless support including making dinner every night.



## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Background and Need for the Study .....	10
Researcher’s Perspective .....	15
Research Study .....	16
Research Questions .....	18
Theoretical Framework: .....	18
Cultural Humility and Community of Practice .....	18
Educational Significance .....	24
Definition of Terms .....	25
Positionality .....	26
<b>CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Language Policies, Chinese Heritage Teachers and Ed. Contexts .....	27
History of Chinese as a Foreign Language.....	27
Racialization of Chinese Population .....	28
Foreign Language Expansion .....	29
Challenges Faced by Immigrant Teachers .....	30
Instructional Challenges .....	31
Linguistic Challenges .....	31
Transformative Education .....	33
Asian Diaspora .....	33
Bilingual Immersion Education; Language and Culture .....	35
Historical Context and Foundation.....	35
Conflict and Controversy .....	38
Progressive Education .....	40
Historical Context of Progressive Education .....	41
Progressive Education and Language.....	46
Summary.....	48
<b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>49</b>
Research Questions .....	51
Research Design .....	51
Research Site .....	55
Selection of Participants .....	58
Data Collection .....	61
Data Analysis.....	62
Reflections .....	62
Closing.....	63

<b>CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>65</b>
Finding 1: Dimensions of Mentorship.....	67
Sheng .....	68
Lisa .....	70
Peripheral Mentorship .....	74
Hui .....	75
Den .....	80
Researcher’s Perspective on Dimensions of Mentorship .....	81
Finding 2: Apprenticeship into Design Thinking .....	82
Researcher’s Perspective on Apprenticeship into Design Thinking .....	88
Finding 3: Developing a Bicultural Growth Mindset.....	89
Researcher’s Perspective on Developing a Bicultural Growth Mindset .....	96
Discussion of Findings .....	98
Mentorship Relationships .....	99
Mentoring and Communities of Practice.....	100
Bicultural Growth Mindset.....	101
Surprises .....	104
<b>CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>107</b>
Introduction .....	107
Summary of Study .....	108
Immigration Policies: Residential Assistance and Community Impact .....	110
Future of Progressive and Dual Language Education .....	111
Recommendations .....	113
Accountability Systems .....	113
Mentorship and Promotion of Cultural Humility .....	115
Implications and Delimitations.....	117
Concluding Remarks .....	118
References .....	121

## CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### Introduction

Several years ago, in 2013, I relocated to California from Phoenix, Arizona seeking employment at a number of schools. I came across a new small progressive Chinese Mandarin Immersion private school in an urban city in California, which I will refer to as CIM. I was drawn to the school and the Chinese Homeroom Teachers (CH), many of whom shared that they were born and raised in China. Since I was in need of a teaching job, and they were in need of teachers, initially I volunteered for several months. The following school year, I was hired as the English Specialist Teacher (ES) for the lower elementary school to teach literacy and collaborate with the CHT team. Our goals together required imagination, innovation and determination to implement a progressive immersion educational experience for our students.

The model of the school was unique and buzzing with potential, comprising a stimulating blend of progressive education and Mandarin immersion. The term progressive has many meanings; it often refers to those seeking to radically transform the current society or political system, through social or structural change, revolution, or radical reform. However, for the context and purpose of this study, I'm using it referring to the *progressive* model of Deweyan education of student-centered and project-based learning - a constructivist education model.

The ultimate goal for progressive education is an increased degree of student autonomy, including task-based skills, project-based inquiry and cooperative learning activities to increase critical thinking skills. In addition to the progressive model, the school offers a full immersion program in Mandarin at the K-5 grade levels; meaning

language learning time is based on an 80% Mandarin and 20% English language instructional design. Later, as the grade levels advance, the Mandarin language immersion eventually decreases and transitions to a 50% English and 50% Mandarin model.

The idea of CIM started in 2004 with a small group of parents who were interested in creating the best possible educational environment for their children. The founders identified two key ideas; bilingual education was beneficial for cognitive development, and progressive schools inspire and prepare students to become lifelong learners. The parent community took both concepts and created a progressive Chinese Immersion (CIM). The school began its first year in 2008 as a two-room Reggio- Emilia inspired Mandarin immersion preschool (CIM.org, 2018). Three years later, the Board of Trustees agreed to pursue a kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade program due to the high demand, which created a need to relocate in order to accommodate a larger volume of students. In 2016, the property of CIM's permanent location was purchased and throughout the years, the campus' physical spaces have reduced and expanded with the ebb and flow of school-wide construction. To accommodate learning spaces, the school continues to gain financial support from families, teachers and students. This was all made possible with contributions made by the affluent community members, tuition payments, and donations. By the year 2021, the pioneering students who began the journey at CIM will graduate and move on to high school.

The cost of private school in an affluent location such as San Francisco is high, and CIM is no exception. Since the prices of living in the Bay Area have increased, CIM's tuition increased as well. Currently, the price for tuition from preschool to middle

school is \$31,204 per year. The cost of preschool and elementary education for this institution is close to that of college tuition. This is due to several factors including the need for more teachers, resources and the ownership of the school site location.

This niche start-up environment immediately grabbed my attention and, at the time, was only in its second year as an elementary school. After months of volunteering at the school, I was able to obtain a position as an English specialist teacher. My knowledge of the Mandarin language was minimal; however, the environment was exciting and bustling with captivating projects, colorful artwork, and a friendly community. I was interested not only in the students' ability to learn the Mandarin language and culture, but also the teachers who were creating a curriculum influenced by progressive principles in a bilingual setting.

The problem or challenge ahead for the unique goals of the school in terms of curriculum and instruction was finding other frameworks as a guide for schools with a blend of progressive and mandarin education. According to The Asia Society (2018) the Chinese Early Language and Immersion Network reported that there were more than 330 Chinese dual language immersion programs operating in the U.S. Separately, in The United States, explicitly progressive schools are found in mostly small, independent institutions on the east and west coasts; some in the South and the Midwest including a Chicago public school district that calls itself "progressive" (Little & Ellison, 2017). CIM continues the process of designing an innovative curriculum with Chinese and progressive education at the forefront of their framework.

Over the next few years, I found the success of the immersion program was dependent on both the English Specialist (ES) and Chinese Homeroom Teachers (CHT)

openly collaborating. We had to overcome many challenges in order to create a unique framework, including changes in leadership, shifts in curriculum, and working around visa dependencies for teachers working in the U.S. from international countries. In spite of these challenges, CIM continues to thrive. Working alongside my colleagues, we established a deeper sense of community and resilience by developing together a progressive and bilingual immersion curriculum.

Additionally, as teachers we are responsible not only for teaching academic content, social-emotional learning but also developing and refining new curriculum each year. To adhere to the progressive model and adjust to new students each year, the teachers create new resources for every academic content area to cater to their students' individual needs. We have a tremendous amount of responsibility for curriculum design, student records, school meetings, parent communication, and mentorship.

Related to the essential systems, policies and programming, the curriculum design and integration of both English and Mandarin were designed by, for, and with teachers in this community. Each class comprises a maximum number of 22 students and two classes per grade level. Within each classroom there are two lead Chinese Homeroom Teachers. The students are immersed in Mandarin instruction for the majority of the day in core content areas and attend an English class with an English Specialist for one hour at least four days a week.

In its first years, the full immersion model guided an 80% Chinese language and 20% English language instruction. The California State standards shaped the beginnings of the curriculum for both Mandarin and English classes, which established guidance for academic content. However, resources, integration of themes and topics were designed

primarily from teachers to activate deep understanding and attend to the needs of their students. Chinese language classes started with basic vocabulary and Chinese character writing and English classes focused on The Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop model. The evolution of the curriculum design matured, strategically weaving inquiry and child-led study into the curriculum while CIM continued to attract a growing number of families.

Currently, the independent private school uses research-based foundations of basic reading, writing and math programs, but only uses the most essential units in order to compose a curriculum to fit a CIM model. Meaning teachers, coaches, and students work together to inform the most essential pieces of the jigsaw to teach the whole child. Blending its own distinct progressive curriculum centered on the school-wide, Units of Exploration (UoE) which connects language, literacy, project-based learning and an inquiry framework. As part of the school's appeal, the UoEs are an essential integrated piece to the progressive curriculum. This is one way in which progressive education is visible.

Furthermore, communication with families and the specialist staff is an essential component to establishing a positive classroom environment and building community. The family demographics are made up of a mix of multiracial and ethnic backgrounds. However, like many other independent private institutions in our area, reflect the economic dominant population majority of affluent White and Asian American families. Here is a chart to demonstrate the diversity of the school with over 394 students in total ranging from the Preschool, Elementary and Middle school. To add, the gender of our student population is 76% female to 24 % male.

### Diversity of Student Population

% Of Population	Ethnicity
35%	Asian American
33%	Two or More (Most commonly Asian American and White)
26%	White
6%	Latino/a
1%	Black
<1%	Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander
<1%	Native American/ Alaskan Native

The makeup of teachers at CIM is diverse as well. The English specialists are made up of five teachers from diverse racial backgrounds all across the United States. They have different teaching backgrounds in various grade levels and experiences in the teaching profession ranging from the first year to over 20 years. Most of the teachers are monolingual and identify as male or female. The English specialists drop into their assigned classroom each day to teach one hour of English language and literacy skills. Usually there are two English Specialists per 22 students and consists of a lead teacher with an assistant. They follow The Teachers College Writers and Readers Workshop model and integrate UoE's when possible.

The CH population is made up of a majority of women, their experience in teaching ranging from novice backgrounds to over 20 years of experience, mostly multilingual, and immigrants with working Visas native to various diverse areas of Mainland China or Taiwan. Within each classroom, there are approximately 22 students



per classroom in the elementary school with two CH per class and three teachers per classroom in the Kindergarten classrooms. The ratio of students per CH is approximately 6-1.

There is a limited body of research to support international Chinese teacher preparation and training to sustain Chinese language education. Not only is there a limited body of research of Chinese teacher support in US immersion schools, missing from the discussion are rich descriptions of the actual experiences immersion teachers have as they attempt to balance language and content in their teaching (Cammarata, & Tedick, 2012). The problems and issues to address are as follows:

1. In the US the number of Chinese schools is increasing with little research to support best practices (Asia Society, 2017).
2. The narratives of teachers in immersion settings are missing from the current literature (Cammarata, & Tedick, 2012).
3. The number of teachers from international contexts rises as the number of language schools increase due to globalization (Shin, 2018).
4. Language teacher identity is a developing subject of significance in research on language education and teacher development (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005).

To fill this gap in the literature, this study examines the experiences of both English specialist teachers and native Chinese immersion teachers to capture their experiences through reflections as progressive and language teachers. The success of the program requires careful analysis to grasp the teachers' cultural and pedagogical experiences within this institution. This study will reveal their experiences personally,

culturally, pedagogically, to unveil any evidence of transformational theories to further bodies of research within the progressive immersion field. Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005) state, in order to understand language teaching and pedagogy we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers we need to have a clearer sense of who they are; the professional, cultural, political, and individual self is crucial in understanding language instruction and learning. This study aims to analyze the personal experiences, development and reflections of their process through transformation, if any, for immersion educators teaching in the United States.

There is very little research addressing the specificity around the best practices and suggestions for teachers working in the US from China. Lyon (2018) states, more reports have called for increased efforts to build Chinese language programs, prepare teachers, and create digital resources to serve them. Therefore, gaining understanding about the teachers' adjustment to teaching in the American school system will further inform colleagues, administration and community members of the needs of international teachers as progressive pedagogues. The experiences of both the English Specialist (ES) and Chinese Homeroom Teachers (CHT) weigh heavily on the longevity of future progressive dual-language programs in the United States. Their experiences describe how future Mandarin immersion programs can be successful and contribute to the larger scope of dual language educational research in the United States.

In the United States, Mandarin dual language schools have become increasingly popular. According to The Asia Society (2008), there has been a significant growth in the number of Chinese bilingual programs in the United States since 2005. Interest in acquiring the knowledge of the Chinese language and culture is becoming undoubtedly

urgent. “In 2006, at the higher education level, there were 51,582 students learning Chinese, a 52 percent increase over 2002” (Asia Society, 2008, p. 2), and the trend continues to grow. According to Wang and Kuo (2016), the popularity of learning Chinese Mandarin as a foreign language has grown exponentially in the United States; consequently, there is an acute shortage of qualified, certified Mandarin teachers. As a result, many teachers are being recruited from international countries and placed in unfamiliar school settings, and the consequences can be problematic (Dunn, 2013). Teachers from international backgrounds are expected to teach in United States schools, while their background knowledge, experience, and pedagogical practice are from a broad spectrum of countries and cultures. Without substantial support and practices in place for these teachers, serious challenges arise. According to Dunn (2013) the most frequently recognized challenges of recruitment include culture shock, communication difficulties, and family issues.

Through the lens of Chinese language instructors and English specialists’ voices, I hope this study will identify ongoing personal and professional transformation as progressive pedagogues. My theoretical framework is grounded in Community of Practice theory to get a deeper sense of how a progressive bilingual immersion school develops a sense of collective identity beginning with the individual experiences. This framework also includes cultural humility to get a deeper sense of cultural reflection; understanding of one's own position, supportive interaction, and holding systems accountable for education. I will describe the experiences of both the English specialist teachers in addition to the Chinese teachers at CIM by focusing on how the integration of

progressive and mandarin approaches blends. My hope is to offer insight and recommendations for experimental language programs in the future.

### **Background and Need**

As a teacher with several years of experience at an immersion school, my personal investigations and inquiries discussed with fellow colleagues about best practices are constantly evolving. There is a need for research in how to balance content and language instruction. As stated by Cammarata and Tedick, (2012) “Despite the wealth of research findings on language development in immersion and other scholarship to date, our understanding of content and language integration in immersion teaching remains incomplete” (p. 254). The structure of this program is unique and piecing together best techniques is an essential part of moving bilingual immersion education forward. Designing programs to suit the needs of bilingual students is complex especially when considering the backgrounds of diverse teachers from American and international teaching experiences. As Garcia, Zakharia, and Otcu, (2013) state, “many of the educators in these bilingual community education efforts teach today as they themselves were taught, not only in a different era, but also in a very different sociolinguistic and sociopolitical context” (p. 40). Discovering how to balance such content, in its current day, by considering the voices of immersion educators could generate new findings or further evidence to delve deeper into in the field of bilingual immersion education and progressive education.

Additionally, I am interested in the shift in teacher identity and how one becomes more progressive in a nuanced setting. Immersion education is complex. With limited time throughout the day, my personal experience is that I understand the urgency to teach

both content and language effectively. Balancing content and language instruction continues to be a predicament according to (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Swain & Johnson 1997). Kong (2015) explains “Teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes are not isolated in affecting their actual practice in the classroom” (p. 21). Which Van Den Berg (2002) contrasts, it is the teacher’s whole identity that demonstrates how and which instructional teaching practice is prioritized in the classroom.

Further, there is a need to facilitate the specificities concerning Mandarin language and teaching practices in the United States. My goal is to articulate the reflections and findings of a specific group, which I acknowledge I am not a part of, to fill in the gap of this research through careful analysis of native Chinese teachers. According to Ruan, Zhang, and Leung (2016),

There is a general lack for a coherent body of Chinese language education CLE research and theories that can provide educators, practitioners, and especially pre-service and novice teachers with an overarching picture of the current state of CLE to guide Chinese language teaching and learning in practice (p. ix).

A small body of research identifies the differences and similarities in cultural and pedagogical practices, as well as difficulties concerning the effects of cultural perspectives. These long-term challenges associated with international teachers require cultural, pedagogical, and personal support needed to thrive in a U.S. education system (Dunn, 2013). International teachers have become critical to second language programs in the U.S., which leads to the need for deeper cultural interpretational understanding to support international educators who grew up and experienced primary and secondary education outside of the United States. The cultural distinction between environments in

which these teachers were educated and prepared to work and the new school environment is most likely to create conflict, especially for novice teachers (Romig, 2009). Through this research, I strive to find useful techniques and guiding tools for progressive dual language teachers.

Teacher preparation and teacher quality are highly impacted when recruiting foreign language teachers in rare second languages. Ruan et al., 2016 state, conflicts caused between cultural differences, teaching strategies, teaching philosophies, instructional approaches as well as classroom management approaches can hinder future developments, sustainability, and expansion of Chinese as a foreign language. A study conducted by McGinnis (1994) examined the lack of clarity defining “culture” and the concerning conflict for students learning a less than common second language, such as Chinese, Japanese or Russian. McGinnis also states, “there is clearly the potential for conflict in cultures of instruction for those involved in Chinese language education in the United States” (p. 81). As teacher preparation is the primary introduction to pedagogy, further research investigating nuanced environments will help add potential answers to undiscovered features of teaching and preparation. This study will specifically identify the progressive angle of immersion pedagogy through an immersion context.

Since best practices and pedagogical philosophies of teachers from all over the world are vastly different, there is a need to investigate how an immersion program blends and implements both dual language and progressive practices. For example, teaching philosophies, which profoundly shapes Chinese culture, is deeply rooted in Confucianism, this ideology attaches great esteem to the role of the teacher and education (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998). Their hierarchical teacher-student relationship allows them to

have absolute authority not only of content knowledge but also in other various aspects of life such as, “dress, language, manners, social conduct and interpersonal relationships” (Hue & Li 2008, p. 31). The perceptions of teaching and instruction in China accept teacher-centered pedagogical practices to indicate absolute order and structure. The roles between the teacher and students in China are perceived as more “dominant, authoritative, and content-centered and classroom management in China is strict, simple, homogenous and influenced greatly by Confucian values” (Zhou & Li, 2015, p. 216). Finally, by addressing through multiple perspectives of teaching philosophies, I will provide connections to other cultural integrations within bilingual immersion settings.

In contrast, the American philosophy of education programs values a constructivist model and a student-centered approach, therefore allowing cooperative workgroups, and knowledge application (Yue, 2017). This is especially true in progressive environments where students are encouraged to produce child-centered environments and prepares students for democratic societies. The methodical approach to progressive education culture that adheres to these most common practices as stated by Little and Ellison (2013) include:

1. Attention to children’s emotions as well as their intellects;
2. Reliance on students’ interests to guide their learning;
3. Curtailment or outright bans on testing, grading, and ranking;
4. Involvement of students in real-world endeavors, ranging from going on field trips to managing a farm;
5. The study of topics in an integrated way, from a variety of different disciplines;
6. Support for children to develop a sense of social justice and become active participants in America’s democracy (p. 52).

Consequently, the volume of factors contributing to the obstacles of classroom culture and school culture creates a dilemma for teachers' classroom management. In addition to the complications and cultural differences between teacher and student relationships, classroom management, and pedagogy. Furthermore, based on the experiences of instructors, the institutions in which they teach should be able to address such issues. However, naming specific reflections, best practices, and strategies within personal experiences will inform further pedagogical practices.

As part of the CIM philosophy, progressive education is a focus of the school's mission. As stated from their Philosophy CIM (2018) believes in these specific tenets of Progressive education:

- Attending to the whole child, not just academics.
- Building a sense of community and collaboration amongst students.
- Social Justice and talking classroom learnings into the wider world to improve the community, both locally and internationally.
- Developing a sense of deep understanding and delving into a topic for context and a sense of purpose.
- Active Learning, with students directing the course of inquiry within each unit. All students are encouraged to be self-reflective, formulate questions and think through possibilities. (Our-Educational-Philosophy, 2018)

Based on these tenets of progressive education, I am interested in how teachers are navigating language and progressive aspects within this institution.



### **Researcher's Perspective**

Throughout the years working alongside my colleagues, I struggled to blend and make sense of my own teaching and practice of what progressive teaching means within an immersion setting. Using my personal experience from traditional models to progressive praxis, CIM is no different than other sites in attempting to integrate teachers from complex teaching backgrounds. The case for CIM is distinctive in the sense that it brings a bilingual immersion approach and progressive philosophy following another layer of new linguistic and cultural understanding for the entire community. As bilingual programs broaden to and adhere to the needs of a global society, the importance of research in authentic training and best pedagogical practices are critical to the future of schools and school reforms around the world. It has been in my experience to discuss with my colleagues how the impact of certain traditional pedagogical practices affects the mission of the school and a broader context within bilingual immersion education. There have been a number of experimental systems at CIM and our shortcomings have made us more informed and reflective of the work that is currently done.

Studying the experience of two groups of teachers of which I am a part of only one, critical to the analysis of this research, it is important to acknowledge recognition of the insider-outsider perspective. The groups include the native Chinese teachers and a diverse group of English teachers from different teaching backgrounds and experiences including myself. In my role as one of the English teachers, I identify as a Chicana, Latina, U.S. born citizen. I recognize the racial, ethnic, and privilege of my status in addition to other positionalities, as a woman with nearly 10 years of classroom teaching

experience. I examined the experiences of English specialist teachers and also the experiences of teachers from international settings.

Again, I want to reiterate that I am not a member of one of the ethnic communities of which I am studying. Part of this study was to understand my own positionality in addition to being culturally sensitive, and how I can reflect and understand a group beyond my own. I would also like to acknowledge the ways in which both groups of teachers have been socialized into this work, including my own reflections.

### **Research Study**

The purpose of this study was to highlight the voices of teachers navigating the spaces of a progressive Mandarin immersion environment and to explore the cultural influences these teachers share. More specifically, how the immersion teachers of CIM navigate a progressive pedagogical approach within the immersion setting. Through a qualitative methodology I examined this phenomena through one-to-one interviews, small focus groups, and documented weekly newsletters sent out by classroom teachers who participated in this study. This research demonstrates how two groups of educators work together. I recorded their journey through tracing the process of their experiences, the integration between a bicultural environment, and captured their experiences in a progressive school. The results of this study demonstrated how progressive Mandarin immersion educators effectively and collectively worked together.

Romig (2009) states, “foreign teachers who come from fundamentally different cultural backgrounds and teaching practices are likely to face problems with acculturation, induction and developing competency within the new educational system

and to the expectations in that setting” (p. 2). Currently, American schools with progressive models seeking to adopt Chinese immersion as a foreign language into the curriculum have few studies to reference. Not only is there a gap in the literature for Chinese teachers, the larger context of bilingualism of minority languages in general. As Garcia et.al (2013) state, “The 2006 National Security Language Initiative provides funding for the development of programs, teachers and learning material to expand the teaching of languages other than English, especially those that are critical to national security in K-16” (p. 41). The United States has recognized the need to develop bilingual citizens and the role of ‘International Teachers’ in language education in the United States. Policies branching out funding to develop those programs exceed the number of qualified teachers and frameworks for programs to carry out those programs. Considering the future of American schools, there is funding, but a lack of practices to inform policies, pedagogy, and literature to support the larger context of bilingual immersion education.

I engaged in a deep research process with teachers at the elementary level who volunteered to participate in this qualitative study. First, I asked a group of 15 teachers from different grade levels to participate in a Focus Group to discuss what they thought of progressive education, community, and language curriculum design. After, selecting participants from the Focus Group, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three Chinese Homeroom Teachers (CHT), and three English Specialists (ES). From these interviews, I analyzed teacher histories to engage in conversations about their initial instructional beliefs, and teaching philosophies to identify any shifts in perspectives or ideologies. Finally, I read and analyzed newsletters sent to families throughout the

duration of the study. More specifically, this study provides insight into the blend of language and learning through an inquiry-based framework, pedagogical practices, community culture, and personal reflections as an educator within an innovative school.

The Participants engaged in meaningful conversation that provided insights into their personal expertise as they navigate complex pedagogical goals. The study was designed to discern each individual story; in which I analyzed data, highlighted any shift in teaching philosophies, teaching practices, pedagogy, community strengths, and challenges, along with personal growth throughout this process.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do teachers in a progressive Mandarin immersion school describe their experiences, pedagogical philosophies, and understandings of progressive teaching?
2. How do teachers from China describe their transformation as progressive pedagogues over time?
3. How do native English specialists teachers describe their transformation as progressive pedagogues over time?

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Cultural Humility and Community of Practice***

The theoretical framework is grounded in the *cultural humility* and *the community of practice* theories to get a deeper sense of how a progressive bilingual immersion school develops a sense of identity beginning with the experiences of teachers. As mentioned before, CIM encompasses both progressive and Mandarin Immersion programming. This study focuses on the cultural experiences of both native English American teachers and Chinese teachers, who are responsible for applying the goals of both language immersion and progressive education. To capture their experience holistically, the analysis of their cultural experience includes their experiences as

progressive pedagogues as individuals and as a collective community. The framework aims to analyze their personal and professional experiences, development as pedagogues and cultural integration as a group of educators from international and local teaching backgrounds. Through the lens of cultural humility and community of practice theory, I analyzed the experiences of both the Chinese teachers and English specialist teachers. This study increases teacher visibility, which is critical to progressive and bilingual research. The participants provided evidence of community dynamics, identified transformative practices and strategies, and reflected their insights on a nuanced bilingual institution.

The reason I have selected cultural humility and communities of practice theory as a theoretical framework is because of my own experience as an educator within many different contexts. Through my own observations and cross-cultural understandings, teachers are consistently working in collaboration to identify how and at which points do attitudes, beliefs or adjustments need to be made. I have realized numerous times where moments of critical self-reflection and adjustments have supported my ability to grasp a larger scope in pedagogy or community. Critical understanding and reflection are built into CIM's culture as are mine. I have also observed the shifts in teacher culture between the English and the Mandarin teachers' experiences. The abundance of training adhering to the self-reflection processes, in addition to flexible thinking approaches has allowed many of the teachers to grasp awareness about themselves.

The Community of Practice theory is directly connected to the rethinking about communities and the process of learning and treating it as an "emerging property of whole person's legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice" (Lave,

1991, p. 63). This theory is most appropriate for this study because of the highly collaborative and personal reflective mission of the school. According to the community of practice theory, learning from one's own daily praxis is neither wholly subjective nor fully encompassed in social interaction, and is not a separate entity from the outside world (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, Lave (1991) argues:

Learning is recognized as a social phenomenon composed of the experienced, lived-in world, through peripheral participation in ongoing social practice; the process of changing knowledgeable skill is subsumed in processes of changing identity in and through membership in a community of practitioners; and mastery is an organizational, relational characteristic of communities of practice (p. 64).

The communities of practice theory as stated by Wenger and Trayner (2015) is defined as, “communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p.1). The community aspect and definition is specific in the sense that CIM’s teachers are part of a network working on a similar goal and exploring the field of progressive and language immersion pedagogy. Within this framework three components are required in order to be defined as a community of practice: (1) the domain, (2) the community, and (3) the practice.

To elaborate, Wenger and Trayner (2015) state the criteria as follows; the domain is an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. The membership implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore shared expertise in a particular area. The community is described as a group pursuing their interest in their area of expertise, members agree and engage in group discussions, assist one another, and share

information. Additionally, the members involved in the community of practice do not necessarily have to work together on a daily basis. Finally, a community of practice includes members with a purpose and expertise. They develop a shared practice by utilizing a repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems. Through the lens of the community of practice I hope to find specific components related to how teachers in a progressive immersion setting describe their experiences, pedagogical philosophies, and understandings of progressive teaching.

As an extension to *communities of practice* theory, the conceptual understanding of practice as stated by Wenger (1998) is “first and foremost, a process by which we can experience the word and our engagement with it as meaningful. In short, as participants in society whether it be among families or educational institutions, that practice is meaning as an experience of everyday life (pg. 52). I used the *communities of practice* theory to extend the idea that our everyday human engagements in life therein lies a process. A process to negotiate, to communicate and involve the members of that group or society to work cohesively. As teachers and curriculum designers of a progressive language program we are consistently in the process of negotiation between best practices, our own experiences as professionals, and a race against time. As a consequence, developing trust sustains the relationships between teachers and therein a successful working environment.

Cultural humility was derived from the medical field in hopes to address race, gender, and diverse backgrounds appropriately. The concept of cultural humility was created as a critique to cultural competence and a way to step back to understand one’s own postulations and biases, considering a greater scope of cultural inequalities

(Kumagai & Lyson, 2009). The term “cultural competence” does not address the layers of complexities, and therefore postulates that cultural knowledge can be mastered, which assumes that once one has gained proficiency in other cultural beliefs and attitudes, they have achieved competence.

In the words of Kumagai and Lyson (2009), “Cultural competency is not an abdominal exam” (p. 783). Further, to be culturally competent or to receive diversity and inclusion training adheres to the notion that the knowledge of culture has met a specific expectation. Cultural humility takes cultural knowledge a step further and gives space to the self and an examination of power structures. It is defined as “a process that requires humility as individuals and continually engages in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p.118). Through the commitment and conceptual framework of cultural humility, professionals from backgrounds in medicine, social work and education can adhere to the lifelong goal to enhance critical consciousness of self and others.

Furthermore, the term “cultural humility” rests on the belief that cultural understanding is achieved through critical self-reflection and critical consciousness by addressing different cultures and individuals as complex and dynamic beliefs and attitudes. Kumagai and Lyson (2009) describe critical self-reflection as not solely looking at the individual self, but “stepping back to understand one’s own assumptions, biases, and values and shifting of one’s gaze from self to others and conditions of injustice in the world” (p. 783). Through cultural humility, there is an opportunity for growth, tolerance, self-awareness and engagement with community members in a supportive manner.



As a tool to work toward cultural humility, Tschaepe (2018) parallels attributes of cultural humility, to Dewey's progressive proponents by centralizing self-reflection and inquiry. According to Tschaepe, "Adhering to our habits of thought to the point of being ignorant of the need for inquiry, we perpetuate that ignorance into problems of which we are unaware therefore occurs in cases wherein we mistakenly believe that we are culturally competent" (2018, p. 157). By shifting our thought patterns to the processes of suggestions, questioning, and critical thinking, cultural humility allows opportunity for professional and personal growth. Through cultural humility, relying on inquiry is necessary.

To assess current practices of cultural differences and experiences of teachers I will determine those criteria through the lens of cultural humility. As CIM works to instill progressive tenants such as inquiry, and reflection, I found it most appropriate to use cultural humility as an assessment for how and why teachers make informed decisions about their pedagogical practices. For example, how do teachers engage with one another as team teachers within the classroom? How are decisions made when working across both Mandarin and English specialists? What are the limitations or benefits to collaborating with specialists who come from international and local backgrounds? Or, how does language impact the school culture and understanding of progressive pedagogy, specifically under the tenant of social justice? The inquiries are open-ended and are rooted in bilingual and personal and professional reflections on school culture, identity and language.

### **Educational Significance**

This study focuses on the experiences of bilingual immersion teachers in the United States and aims to deliver the insights, challenges, and recommendations for colleagues, administrators, and policymakers within the progressive and bilingual immersion field. This research contributes to the growing number of American students seeking a wider language capability. The increase of Chinese language students studying Mandarin at the K-12 level and collegiate levels shows the “growing collective capacity” to share knowledge internationally (Ruan et al., 2016, p. x). Mandarin immersion schools in the U.S. are becoming more commonplace.

It is my goal that this study will provide evidence to develop appropriate professional development and mentorship within a progressive immersion setting. I hope to address the nuanced understandings of cultural differences, pedagogical strategies, reflections, and, if any transformational practices within a progressive and Chinese immersion setting. This research is intended to facilitate the conversation surrounding the United States education system, policymaking, and teacher education programs to address the urgent need for a cultural understanding between U.S. and foreign-born educators to identify and enrich such platforms.

To date, CIM is the only preschool-middle school in the U.S. with both a progressive and Mandarin immersion model at the elementary level. However, a near paucity of research considers the experiences of immersion teachers who are teaching in a progressive Mandarin immersion setting. This research is intended to provide recommendations for colleagues, administration, school leadership, and other progressive

programs on how to foster support for educators in immersion settings and from international countries teaching in U.S. schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

***One-Way (foreign language) immersion:*** A language majority (English speaking) student audience, learning a targeted language to promote additive bilingualism and bi-literacy, academic achievement, and intercultural understanding (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012).

***Culture:*** An integrated set of norms by which human behaviors, beliefs, and thinking are organized. Culture is a set of standards and control mechanisms with which members assign meanings values and significance to things, events, and behaviors (McBride, 2015).

***Immersion Education:*** Immersion education is a form of bilingual education that aims for additive bilingualism by providing students with a sheltered classroom environment in which they receive at least half of their subject matter instruction through the medium of a language they are learning as a second language, foreign, heritage or indigenous language. In addition, they receive some instruction through the medium of the majority language in the community (Lyster, 2007, p.8).

***Progressive education:*** A child-directed model of education integrating; individualized growth and development; utilizing meaningful narrative assessments; inquiry and project-based learning approach integrated with awareness of social justice and democratic learning (CIM, Mission Statement 2017). The term progressive has many meanings; it often refers to those seeking to radically transform the current society or political system, through social or structural change, revolution or radical reform.

However, in this study, I'm using it in this study grounded in *progressive* education of John Dewey's model based on student-centered and project-based learning - a constructivist education model.

**CIM:** Chinese Immersion School (a pseudonym).

**UoE:** The Units of Exploration; units to study that integrated task based and constructivist learning approaches.

### **Positionality**

One of the benefits to this study is my positionality. As the lead researcher, my role as a colleague of the immersion teachers for four years will have an effect. I have the privilege of knowing all of the participants within the study. There is a sense of trust and professionalism with each personal relationship, which I believe will grant further insight to the complexities of the authentic experiences of international educators.

To contrast, one of my limitations is my lack of knowledge in Mandarin. For many of the Chinese teachers, English is their second language; therefore, conducting the research in English will cause a loss of meaning or understanding within the discussions. I will be asking teachers to participate in interviews and focus groups in English, which will be recorded and translated if needed. To reduce any loss of meaning or understanding I will be collecting newsletters written in English by the participants. To provide better insight, the newsletters also include inserted photos that will be used as artifacts to analyze as pieces of evidence to describe their experiences, pedagogical philosophies, and understandings of progressive teaching. I will also be outsourcing any translations from the newsletters or any verbal recorded data to be transcribed and later reviewed and analyzed myself.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter provided the purpose of the study, the problem and research questions. This chapter will present a more in-depth review of related literature. To understand the breadth and depth of the experiences and nuances of bilingual immersion and progressive education the following will be composed of three broad themes. I will first discuss the language policies, Chinese heritage teachers and educational contexts in the US. The next section will discuss bilingual education by specifically addressing immersion education, language and culture. Finally, the last section will review progressive education's principles throughout history and context.

### **Language Policies, Chinese Heritage Teachers and Education Contexts in the U.S.**

Since few prior studies specifically investigate the experiences of Chinese teachers in U.S. bilingual schools, I review a broad range of literature on the social impact and development of the Chinese language in addition to the perspectives of Chinese teachers and scholars organized into three sections. The first section targets the historical context of the development of Chinese as a foreign language in U.S. schools. The next section discusses challenges faced by immigrant pre-service and in-service teachers. For example, Romig (2009) found that a lack of experience in teaching led to novice teachers' difficulty in adaptation in schools. Finally, I will also examine leadership within educational institutions to provide further insight on the organization and community development as international educators adapt to U.S. schools.

### ***History of Chinese as a Foreign Language in U.S. schools***

As part of the rise of Chinese as a foreign language taught in U.S. schools, it is necessary to discuss the background of Chinese language education. I address how the

expansion of the language impacted speakers of Chinese and learners. The following section examines the historical arc, which influenced the U.S. in political, economic, social and cultural contexts.

Over 30 years ago, the first Mandarin language immersion school sprouted in the city of Edmonton, Canada in the Public school system at the kindergarten level (Weise, 2014). The program gained popularity, expanded and by 2014 the program developed to serve nearly 2,000 youth from kindergarten to the high school level. In the U.S., Spanish immersion programs began in 1971 and remain a popular program for many families (Weise, 2014). However, with the political power of China and the economic influence on the global economy, mandarin gained tremendous attention. According to Asia Society (2005) “China’s entry into the global market had profound effects on U.S. economy, foreign policy, culture and society” (p.6). As a critique of the history of foreign language programs, it is pertinent to reflect on the arc of China’s relationship in the US. By blindly accepting the momentum of these programs on a mission to create a more global society, it is hard to imagine what was originally in place for Chinese as a foreign language in U.S. settings.

### ***Racialization of the Chinese Population & Linguicism***

Looking back through American history and the oppression of minority groups specifically focusing on the people of Asian backgrounds specifically, China, it is no wonder why the history of Chinese as a foreign language in the United States is limited. The Chinese Exclusion Act, is one example of Asian American history which directly correlates to the emphasis on foreign language and education. For instance when the Exclusionary act began in 1887 and ending in 1943 was the beginning of a conditional

acceptance into the American culture. Treatment of the Chinese was atrocious and according to Zia (2000) “The discriminatory treatment of the Chinese was overtly racist; the California state legislature declared that “Negros, Mongolians, and Indians shall not be admitted into public schools” (p. 26). Acceptance of the Chinese culture and the language were slow to accept as anything, but “alien and foreign” and therefore would take over fifty years to end the racist law. “In 1943, the laws that excluded Chinese from immigration were finally repealed; Chinese could become naturalized”(Zia, 2000, p. 40). People have overcome a great deal of trauma to become a recognized and desired language in the American educational system.

### *Foreign Language Expansion*

Furthermore, it would take nearly twenty years for Congress to pass the National Defense Education Act Title VI of 1958 aimed at bringing non-European languages into U.S. graduate schools (Weise, 2014, p.11). Finally, According to Weise (2014) it wasn't until 1957 that more than just a few colleges offered Asian studies programs and a few years later in 1960, there were a total of 1,844 students studying Chinese in U.S. colleges. Decades later near the 1990s the creation of the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) offered to school districts grants to fund foreign language instruction in primary and high schools (Weise, 2014). Further expansion of foreign language programming took place in 2006 and 2007 which funded Chinese in addition to several “critical foreign languages- specifically Arabic, Japanese, Korean, Russian and languages in the Indic Iranian and Turik families” [as cited in Weise, 2014, p.12]. The access for young Americans to learn a broader range of languages would not have been attainable without an initiative from the U.S. Department of Defense, as a post--9/11 strategy to

build relationships between the U.S. and foreign countries. In response to the initiatives to the expansion of those programs, the critique of Grace Lee Boggs (2012) on American autonomy came to mind, “The will of too many Americans has been to pursue private happiness and take as little responsibility as possible for governing our country” (p. 34). As a critique of language expansion, it is imperative that the use of languages motivates youth to use this form of power and privilege to foster peace, tolerance and challenge the status quo.

While at one point in time the Chinese language and culture were demonized by the U.S., it is crucial to reflect on the exploitation of power within the global economy and how the act of war influenced cultural shifts in the face of acceptance. Additionally, the American perspective and the value of acquiring language as a tool of the Chinese culture have immensely changed. California, once the leading hub of Chinese exclusion has now become a place where creative and nuanced approaches to teaching Mandarin thrive in specialized and private communities. In this sense, the language has become an investment for an nevertheless exclusive demographic that will one day educate the youth.

### **Challenges Faced by Immigrant and In-Service Teachers in U.S. Schools**

Recently the sudden influx of Chinese immersion programs has prompted the demand of Chinese language teachers in the US. Due to the emergence of Chinese language schools, the necessity is greater than the number of highly qualified educators able to teach Mandarin. The following section discusses a multitude of challenges foreign teachers encounter in U.S. settings and names specific issues related to pedagogical



practices, beliefs, values, and cultural differences from the international teachers' perspectives.

### *Instructional Challenges*

Duff and Li (2004) explore the instructional challenges met for teachers at the university level teaching Mandarin. This research identifies the problematic perspectives from participants ranging from students, professors, researchers and the institutions themselves (Chen, Y.L., Yang, T.A. & Chen, H.L., 2017; McGinnis, 1994; Wang, W. & Kuo, N. C., 2016; Yue, Y., 2017; Zhao, Y., Meyers, L., & Meyers, B., 2009). The researchers examined how the use of small groups and partnerships influence the instructional effectiveness. For example, the students were clear about their preferences to have “less peer interaction and rather more correction, repetition, and modeling which pointed to a theoretical contention in applied linguistics” (p. 453). Throughout this study, there is a general consensus that there are gaps in one's own and a student's own learning.

As stated before, the popularity of Mandarin as a foreign language has grown widely in the US. (Chen, Y.L., Yang, T.A. & Chen, H.L., 2017) focus on the practices and challenges of one immersion program to gain in-depth understanding. In this study, the participants were teachers of the kindergarten level in a Mandarin immersion setting. The researchers found the main forms of difficulty were the recruitment of qualified teachers; insufficient professional development; difficulty in balancing content and language instruction; insufficient use of Chinese; and a shortage of resource support (Dunn, A., 2013; Liu, X., 2012; Romig, N., 2009). For example, Liu (2012) illuminates the voices of teacher candidates from China and follows their experiences in an American

high school. One of the key challenges was classroom discipline within the classroom. For instance, Liu (2012) explains how the interns in the study were not used to disciplining students and speaking to their own students so directly by sending them out of the classroom. However, it is common for classroom management to be a challenge with teacher candidates, especially with foreign-born teacher candidates. Ferber and Nillas (2010) emphasized that most teacher candidates grapple with classroom management at the beginning of their teaching experiences.

### *Linguistic Challenges*

Another major concern for teachers instructing the Chinese language in American settings in contrast to English is the distinctive features of the language itself. For instance, Everson (2008, 2009) addressed the issue of keeping students motivated and ensuring the confidence in their students' abilities to learn complex vocabulary or not to become overwhelmed by the memorization of characters. Additionally, there are debates on the common practices and curriculum within the language itself. For example, Yue (2017) addresses the discrepancies in the orthographic systems between the dialects and script from Taiwan and Mainland China.

Ultimately, the studies show there is a scarcity of Chinese as a Foreign Language teacher education programs in the U.S. (Chen, Yang and Chen, 2017; Duff, 2008; Zhou and Li, 2015; and Yu, 2017) and also a limited number of Chinese teaching materials. Many programs have reported an absence of the appropriate materials for immersion settings is a major obstacle and therefore teachers are creating their own and design curriculum from scratch (Chen, Yang and Chen, 2017). According to the literature, the demands of Chinese language programming in U.S. schools is complicated. In closing,

the linguistic discrepancies, restricted options for teacher training programs, a small number of qualified teachers living in the US and a lack of teaching materials demonstrates the tensions which continue to be key issues.

### **Transformative Education and Asian Diaspora**

As a pertinent piece to teachers from international backgrounds becoming familiar with their American school culture, there have been several studies that identify the successes of teachers, and institutional transformations as a community that values their teachers and ongoing progress. I will be discussing the successes of leadership practices in educational programs and also how international teachers identified the ways in which teacher development transformed over time. For example, as a key piece to organizational leadership, several studies argue how the dominant narrative or perception of leadership is an old stereotype and the key to being culturally responsive to community organizations is shared leadership (Omatsu, 2006; Daus-Magbual & Tintiango-Cubales, 2015; Liang, Lee, & Ting, 2002). Granting more opportunities for teachers to step into a role to work in teams, collaborate and instruct creates an environment for leaders to reflect and reexamine their daily pedagogical practices and vision as a school community.

#### *Asian Diaspora*

As an extension of an ethnic studies framework, Daus-Magbual & Tintiango-Cubales (2015) examine the focus model of Critical Leadership Praxis (CLP) within an organization called Pin Educational Partnerships (PEP). As teachers, regardless of international status or not, embodying CLP is a dedication to one's self and community growth. Daus-Magbual & Tintiango-Cubales (2015) argue CLP "produces an

unprecedented number of critical leaders in classrooms, schools, and the community” (p.181). Found throughout several studies, (Chen, YL., Yang, TA. & Chen, H.L. 2017; Liu, 2012; Romig, 2009) found that an increased amount of professional development and mentor teachers served as an important resource for knowing the student population, school culture, procedures as well as a means for moral support. In addition, Liu (2012) supports the importance of community and finds the roles of stakeholders’ support and community influence the participants from international backgrounds the most. A closer examination of educational institutions into leadership strategies and values are inevitable markers for taking action required to change student achievement through strong community and family relationships.

Finally, to respond to the needs of diverse learners and experiences within educational institutions, we need to recognize the talents, skills, and value of “shared leadership” (Omatsu, 2006). To counter dominant narratives of leadership, to counter systematic oppression, and progress our youth and teachers forward melding different experiences. We need to promote a model where students have examined and embody shared leadership. Through this intentional practice and reflection, there can be a systemic change. Overall, the practice of self- reflection is a major component to create a culture that asks, what is best for students and what is best for the self and the community? By collectively promoting open dialogue and instilling progressive transformational change, the experiences of teachers from all backgrounds will benefit one another by helping one another succeed.

## **Bilingual Immersion Education; Language and Culture**

In this section I will provide an overview of bilingual education, immersion education through language and culture. First, I will describe an overview of bilingual education in the US, the foundations and its application. Then I will provide an examination of immersion education through its conflict and complexity, and finally, language and culture within bilingual pedagogy. Through an examination of bilingual education programs, it is critical to describe the context and background of language immersion programs and the complexity involved in bilingual immersion programs.

### ***Historical Context and Foundation***

Initially, bilingual education in the US began with community schools to educate their children in a way to reflect their own community driven efforts, through language, culture, and values (Garcia, Zakharia, & Octu, 2013). For example, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century German communities established their own schools with a network of parochial German language schools in Pennsylvania and Ohio (Castellanos, 1983). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were other organized ethnolinguistic communities such as the Cherokee who established and operated their own educational system with their children learning to read and write in Cherokee (García, 2009). Through the influence of immigrant and indigenous networks there grew a sense of strength and community through the preservation of language and cultural values.

By the 1920s 34 of 48 US states required that English be the exclusive language of instruction (Garcia, 2009). Around that same time, Garcia et al., (2013) states, a more tolerant attitude espoused by John Dewey and Horace Kallen, led to additional efforts by some US ethnolinguistic communities to establish educational programs for their own

children and families from Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Greek, Yiddish speaking developed networks of afterschool and weekend programs in which their language was taught. An era of the Civil Rights during the 1960s led to the development of bilingual education programs supported by ethnolinguistic communities, especially Latinos and two-way bilingual programs (Garcia et al., 2013). The bilingual programs to teach English, as well as maintain the Spanish language were developed by Latino communities in Texas, New Mexico, California, and Arizona without any federal involvement (Castellanos, 1983). The experiences and community validation through these programs instilled positive relationships between culture and language.

During the times of the early 1970s, Bilingual education maintained widespread support from legislators, political leaders and special interest groups, but by the end of the decade the ideology behind bilingual education had abated (San Miguel, 1984). However, in the decades of the 70s and 80s xenophobic rhetoric enforced the suppression of language development programs in the United States, halting minority communities the access to language and opportunity to receive educational equity. Within the US, laws, policies and groups against immersion and bilingual education became a matter of ethnic groups receiving adequate opportunities to learn in their own native languages other than English.

In the US, a Chinese community from San Francisco brought their case to address the principle right to linguistic accommodation and was first recognized by the Supreme Court in 1974 in *Lau v. Nichols*. The *Lau* decision, however, did not address the question of whether language minority children have a right to learn the language of their family or community. As argued by Wiley, Garcia, Danzig, and Stigler, (2014) for the English

only speaking majority in the US, that question of one's right to one's native language when it is other than English is generally weighed against the perceived need to promote English as the common national language. Ultimately the Supreme Court found the *Lau v. Nichols* decision would uphold the right of non-English speaking students to an education equal to that of their English speaking peers (Gandara, Moran, & Garcia, 2004). This was one of the key suits addressing the debates of preserving one's own native language and politicizing language instruction in schools. The contested debate of whether language minorities should have a right to not only linguistic accommodation, but also the promotion of their languages as a means for developing a positive identification with their languages and cultures (Wiley et al., 2014).

Meanwhile in Canada the bilingual and immersion educational promotion of linguistic development was undergoing extensive experimentation and evaluation. In such immersion settings, language skills and subject matter are taught through the second language. The use of the second language as a medium of instruction for subjects such as math, science, or social studies is one of the most distinguishing features of immersion education (Dolson, 1985). Since the foundation of the first Canadian immersion experiments in the mid-1960s, a substantial number of research studies conducted on the effects of immersion and bilingual schools found positive cognitive impacts on students (Dolson, 1985). The results by Swain and Lapkin (1981) are as follows: students acquire high levels of French language skills listening reading as well and speaking and writing reveal high levels of proficiency; finally, students perform better or as well as their monolingual counterparts in the subject areas of mathematics, science and social studies studying in English only programs. As for the impact of the immersion programs and the

benefits it brings to students, the U.S. continues to have debates between bilingual language instruction through political opposition, funding, and sociocultural differences.

### *Conflict and Controversy*

The population of immersion and bilingual language programs in the United States are due in large part to the ethnolinguistic motivations of communities and the influence of Canada's expansion of immersion education (Walker & Tedick, 2005). Over the past 25 years, research has not kept pace with the myriad of issues raised in a complex setting where the learning of curricular content and second language acquisition are expected to develop concurrently (Walker & Tedick, 2000). According to Walker and Tedick, (2000) "little effort has been made to enlist practitioners in the identification and elaboration of issues, problems and outcomes related to immersion language education" (p. 6). There are many different types of language models around the world that take on variations, which can cause different challenges in different settings. For example the programs in bilingual education can take on forms such as one-way, two-way, indigenous immersion, partial/total, early/late 50:50, and 90:10 models (Tedick & Fortune, 2008). The problems related with the implementation of immersion programs point to the complexity of balancing content and languages native speakers of the language and nonnative language instructors in immersion settings. For example, the immersion setting according to the definition of Lyster (2007):

Immersion education is a form of bilingual education that aims for additive bilingualism by providing students with a sheltered classroom environment in which they receive at least half of their subject matter instruction through the medium of a language they are learning as a second language, foreign, heritage or



indigenous language. In addition, they receive some instruction through the medium of the majority language in the community (p. 8).

Various challenges interrelated with the application of immersion programs point to the schools' responsibility toward responding to a wide range of societal challenges that may range from restoring injustices as a result of colonialism, for example, the case of indigenous language immersion, to responding to needs stemming from the transformation of societies into multiethnic multicultural entities responding in ways to cohabitate and collaborate with each other (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). For instance, immersion teachers' attempt at balancing content and language in instruction is an experience lived as a "process of *awakening*, a pedagogical journey whose success is intricately linked to the quest and challenge of figuring out what language to focus on in the context and content instruction" (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012, p. 257). Additionally, as a teacher, finding resources for their subjects, the lack of planning and instructional time for teaching was also noted as a problem (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). The reality is that immersion programs are in fact a complex design of curriculum, language, and content-based instruction.

Other instructional challenges identified within multilingual research finds that bilingual immersion education does not always produce proficiency in all areas of literacy for all students. For example, many language majority students do not achieve native-like language proficiency in speaking and writing the second language, even after 12 or 13 years of immersion schooling (Baker & Wright 2017). Educators in all settings must face the principle of educating the whole child, which can cause challenges in cultural and linguistic dimensions. For example, Cummins (2000) argues to educate the

whole child it is necessary to nurture intellect and identity equally in ways that challenge coercive power; meaning in previous historical contexts dominant group institutions have required that minority groups reject their cultural identity and abandon their “mother tongue.” Equitable educational approaches with language minority students and immigrant youth seek to honor their culture, language, and lived experiences in classroom learning (Aldana & Martinez, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Jimenez, 2020; Wiley et al., 2014). Along these lines, this study seeks to understand how to address bilingual educational settings and teacher perspectives within complicated histories and political ties.

Finally, in areas all over the world, bilingualism is expected. In other parts of the US, there are communities politicizing language by instilling the assimilationist English only laws. The constellation of social, economic, and political circumstances of life have a large bearing on how children will develop both linguistically and cognitively (Bialystok, 2003. p.7). Through a broad look into bilingual education, the cognitive benefits to the political debates, we can agree that bilingual immersion education is a complex, challenging and dynamic landscape to explore.

### **Progressive Pedagogy**

The importance of language used to discuss progressive education cannot be described as one simple definition and therefore, teachers working at the same institution themselves may describe their version of progressive education in completely different ways. I know this because I have heard a number of different definitions describing the meaning of progressive education myself at CIM. As stated by Kohn (2008) the meaning of progressive education is defined too narrowly and understated or otherwise defined as

an exaggerated version whilst dismissing the whole approach. An author, historian, educator and administrator who helped shape Columbia University's Teachers College, Lawrence A. Cremin of the progressive education movement recognized that, "any capsule definition of progressive education...for throughout history [it] meant different things to different people" (as cited in Ravitch, 1983, p.46). The challenge for any institutions describing themselves as progressive, is defining and committing to relevant progressive educational tenants, recognizing their personal influence, and refining pedagogical best practices.

I am interested in the praxis and pedagogy of progressive education in an immersion setting because it not only impacts the culture of a school, but I believe it changes the style, beliefs, and craft of teaching itself. This complemented with learning an additional foreign language impacts communities and the innovation of the future of progressive language programs. In this section, I will review a brief history or progressive education and the future of language and progressive education.

### *Historical Context of Progressive Education*

The progressive education movement has a complicated history. From the beginnings of a Jean Jaques Rousseau in 1783, a philosopher from Geneva advocated for "a child-centered, nature based education as a method for educating children of the wealthy families he tutored; private tutoring for the wealthy being the only form of education at the time" (Garte, 2017, p. 8) acquired high esteem and influence in the philosophies of education. In that same line of influence, nearly a century later in the late 1890s, Maria Montessori held her students to high learning standards and applied structure in a progressive education setting. However, her students lived in deeply impoverished areas

of Southern Italy and Montessori created an individualized curriculum for every child by creating learning centers and used materials from inside and outside of the classroom to help students with their motor development. As a result, she allowed her students to build confidence, problem solve and self-regulation and emotional intelligence (Garte, 2017). Today, there have been adaptations from learning centers to outdoor education that educators utilize in the classroom and identify as strands of progressive education.

According to Rousseau, progressive education was provided in order to defy the corruption of materialism and superficiality of the wealthy, while Montessori aimed to give her student's survival skills and critical thinking skills (Garte, 2017). At the same time, each practitioner deliberately used progressive education as a tool to instill a peaceful and democratic society. Each practitioner planned the curriculum and provided an environment to center individualized lessons to suit the needs of each student. Based on these two influential philosophies, the approach to teaching through a progressive and individualized instruction provided intellectual stimulation and humanitarian advancement for the wealthy and the very poor.

Another pivotal educational reformer and philosopher of Progressive Education was John Dewey; a pioneer of educational theory and reformer shaped the world of education through his theories of pragmatism and democracy in society. Additionally, Jean Piaget wrote about the ideas of Dewey, formulated the constructivist theory, as it relates to many of the foundations of progressive education. As stated by Keenan (1977) Dewey elaborated on progressive pedagogy by discussing the theory of experience and stated, "Experience was much more complex than mere perception or the accumulation of past sensations" (p. 39). Dewey, considering this concept of experience and self-

reflection, redefined the concept of knowledge and documented that “most human behavior traditionally attributed to some faculty of reason” (p. 39). Keenen (1977) further explains that Dewey considered knowledge to arise from the experience of the organism in getting along in life, and individual knowledge was in fact “false” (p. 39) without concrete problem-solving abilities based on the experience of the individual. Moreover, Dewey (1938/1963) expanded on his theory by forming the criteria of experience as what he called, the “category of continuity, or the experimental continuum” (p. 33). According to Dewey and Boydston (1980), he believed schools should be,

“In an interconnected with life so the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of a composite of isolated parts” (p. 106).

Based on this core concept, progressive educators and learners of progressive education learn by the action of doing not by being passive learners. According to Dewey progressive education depends on the teacher’s role as a facilitator of learning. The students’ interest drives the learning experience of the student and therefore the classroom teacher facilitates learning. For progressive educators, the teacher's role was to be a facilitator of learning in classrooms where students' interests helped to provide an appropriate developmental learning experience.

Progressive Education in the US, began as early as the 1920s when more than two-thirds of American children from urban settings and cities were in schools called “Common Schools”, which looked like and operated like factories settings (Little, 2013). Students

were taught common content, crammed into small schoolhouses, and physically punished by the teachers as a form of discipline. However, as a reaction to common schooling, wealthier families sent their children to boarding academies or tutored privately (Little, 2013). The Progressive Education Movement gained a following and traction after a research project was published and commissioned by the Progressive Education Association, titled the “Eight-Year Study” (Little, 2013). This study found students received higher academic achievement, leadership skills, and a better understanding of the democratic systems than peers attending traditional schooling.

The Progressive Education Movement changed the American public school for the first half of the twentieth century by encouraging retention in secondary schools and believing they have an influence in a democratic society (Ravitch, 1983). The movement had the support of regional accrediting agencies and state evaluators judged schools in the 1920s and 30s by using progressive criteria. However, critics of the movement understood the meaning of progressive education differed in meaning and practice. For example, “educators differed in their conceptions of its necessary features: active learning (experiences and projects) rather than passive learning (reading); cooperative planning of classroom activities by teachers and pupils; cooperation among pupils on group projects instead of competition to name a few” (Ravitch, 1983, p.44). The nation at the time demonstrated an ability to work towards innovative curriculum, but failed to move from the needs of the present to the future.

Although after the 1930s the movement fractured and conflict concerning whether schools should take on the role of “trying to create a more just society by instilling political values in their students” (Little, 2013, p.43) among many other critics of the movement

harmed the support it needed. A number of critics and pedagogues who attacked progressive education because they found that the education system as a whole needed a fundamental change and that the curriculum of progressive schools as part of a communist plot (Ravich, 1983). More specifically, George Counts, then a professor at Columbia's Teachers College, gave a series of speeches demanding more political activism, which divided many of the members of the Progressive Education Association (Little, 2013). Members of the association failed to agree and move towards a reconciliation of needs for a whole and just society and instead the Progressive Education Association dissolved in 1955 (Little, 2013 & Ravitch, 1984).

The reality is Progressive Education crumbled for a number of reasons, but several key issues failed to recognize the issues of the times. For instance, the progressives failed to link school to society, progressives failed to take leadership and discuss racial issues and remained blind to the fact that students, families and entire communities were implicated due to the political and social tension (Ravitch, 1983). For centuries, community members and students impacted by their environment have been a source of division and racial segregation. As a result, there have been a number of reforms to alter the learning outcomes for education in America. For instance, school choice allows parents to consider schools established in the progressive tradition. Unfortunately, the families choosing to select Montessori and progressive schools can be defined as white, middle- or upper-class liberals (Hayes, 2008). However, there is also evidence that growing numbers of urban minorities are considering this choice as a way to escape schools they perceive as failing their children (Hayes, 2008). In the age of education reform more and more families are choosing the independent school choice rather than public school education options.

### *Progressive Education and Language*

Careful analysis of the literature also requires lessons from the past on how progressive education influences the American school systems today. Specifically, looking into creative designs of curriculum and language instruction. Elementary language immersion programs have increased in the United States and students' academic achievement is becoming more evident however, teachers have a complex and difficult role as both content and language instructors (Kong; 2017; Walker & Tedick, 2000). There are a large number of studies on the learners of language, but less is related to the teachers' identities with pedagogies (Cammarata and Tedick, 2012; Fortune, Tedick and Walker, 2008).

Kong (2017) argues that the identity of a person's understanding of himself or herself in relation to the outside world highly impacts the pedagogical practices within the classroom. "How immersion teachers view their dual roles as a language teacher and content teacher is shaped through their personal experiences, ethnic cultural values, educational background and professional interaction with colleagues, students, and their parents" (Kong, 2017, p. 21). Through the use of inquiry, Kong's (2017) study identifies how teachers within the classroom use engaging strategies such as inquiry to connect content and language. For example, adapting activities to achieve a more profound understanding of vocabulary, Kong (2017) argues that, "reflection enables teachers to negotiate their multiple identities, adjust their teaching pedagogies and grow as an individual and a team player" (p. 23). Teachers' reflections are a key component to progressive pedagogy and the ongoing process of evaluating beliefs, along with professional identity.



Along with the identities of teachers influencing the classroom environment, research states that dual language immersion is becoming the choice among those supporting bilingual education (González-Carriedo, Bustos, & Ordonez, 2016). The practice of second language learning, constructivist strategies are used as effective pedagogical strategies to enhance engagement such as; learning as collaboration, teachers as facilitators of learning, and language and culture as intertwined elements in schools (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). These students experience the world differently and learn the value of learning a second language in addition to learning through a constructivist approach.

More specifically, learning as collaborators in a second language setting González-Carriedo et al., (2016) demonstrate that students collaborate with one another through different activities. The pairing works together in dual languages where one student is a native speaker of Spanish and their partner, a native English speaker. They cooperate and create meaning together as they work through different activities and create mutually agreed goals. The teacher as a facilitator is represented by the teacher posing guiding questions to help the students become more aware of their own learning both in regard to their academic content and the process of learning. Finally, an example enabling their students to configure their own solutions and look for alternative solutions. Furthermore, students are able to become deep thinkers and problem solvers in both languages. González-Carriedo et al., (2016) also believe that “technological applications may provide students with opportunities to expand their knowledge” (p.110). The constructivist approach, highlight how students internalize their understandings of concepts to which they are shown in lessons; this internalization helps students apply newly gained

interdisciplinary knowledge, Gonzáles-Carriedo et al., (2016). The benefits of implementing such constructivist methodologies align with the teaching philosophies of CIM.

### **Summary**

The composition of this chapter was intended to give an overview and thorough discussion of broad themes featuring the first section describing language policies, Chinese heritage teachers, and educational contexts in the US. The next section discussed bilingual education by specifically addressing immersion education, language, and culture. Finally, the last section reviewed progressive education's principles throughout history and context. As an intentional choice to look into transformative education and learning outcomes, I hope this study will achieve a deep understanding of one another's journey through reflection within immersion education.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to unpack the experiences of CHT and that of ES; I seek to explore the cultural influences, progressive practices, and sense of community these teachers have built in the school. With teachers at the center of this study, their experiences and identities will highlight the significance of how teachers shift in their own philosophies, and pedagogy within a bilingual education and progressive models in the United States. The results from this study may point to strengths and challenges of personal and structural factors within independent schools; as well as practices that may yield better outcomes for supporting the induction and preparation of international teachers. Like Cammarata and Tedick (2012), I am interested in adding on to the prominence of teacher perspective and teacher voice within immersion education. I am also interested in seeking how teachers describe their teaching experiences through pedagogical philosophies, and how teachers collaborate to integrate language context and implement progressive tenants, within their own classrooms.

Using a qualitative research methodology, I recorded the perspectives of immersion teachers through a large focus group meeting, personal semi-structured interviews, newsletters, and teacher files (including philosophies, personal statements, and cover letters). For this study, I collected data from six immersion teachers (three ES and three CH). The teachers included in the semi-structured interviews also shared their teacher files to engage in conversations about their initial instructional beliefs, philosophies, and attitudes about progressive education and how they have shifted, if any change at all.

I conducted one large focus group with a group of 15 teachers and instructional specialists (i.e. Mandarin literacy specialist and the curriculum director) from multiple grade levels from Kindergarten to Fifth grade for a period of 45 minutes. The number of teachers were chosen from various grade levels, to get a better understanding of some of the various similarities and differences within lower and upper schools. I conducted an open dialogue about their pedagogical philosophies, how working in a bilingual environment may have shifted their beliefs and views of teaching, collaboration, and how their experiences at a progressive school have changed their understanding of progressive teaching.

From the focus group, I asked six teachers to volunteer for a further personal investigation to participate in the interviews. I conducted an analysis with the framework of cultural humility and community of practice theory to discuss their work through newsletters, teacher files, and their personal philosophies of teaching. The newsletters allowed participants from the semi-structured interviews to ground their own understanding of progressive and bilingual education to identify and analyze classroom and student interaction through imagery and text to address moments of personal reflections about bilingual education, progressive praxis, and descriptions of moments of transformational reflection if any.

This study was carried out over a period of four months. I studied and recorded their journey through tracing the process of their experiences, the integration between bicultural environments, and captured their experiences as progressive pedagogues. The purpose is to describe the experiences of teachers by how they themselves identify as language immersion teachers, as progressive pedagogues, and collaborators, at a

progressive Mandarin immersion school. Finally, my goal is to elevate the voices of local immersion teachers and international teachers who work in the United States.

Further, it is important to recognize my positionality as the researcher seeking to understand the complex relationships between two groups, of which I am a member of only one group. The unavoidable consequence of being part of the institution, of which the study will be conducted, is I have first hand participation in some of the teaching experiences and will take positions in the midst of key events in order to observe and understand a phenomenon (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I am already a member of the stated group and have built professional relationships with my colleagues and acknowledge my role as an outsider and insider of this research.

### **Research Questions**

The participants of this study were composed of fifteen teachers in a large focus group from both the CH and ES perspectives. Next, I narrowed my focus into six (three CH and three ES) participants in personal semi-structured interviews of those from the focus group. These participants were selected on a voluntary basis. Critical personal accounts of their experiences were addressed by asking the following questions;

1. How do teachers in a progressive Mandarin immersion school describe their experiences, pedagogical philosophies, and understandings of progressive teaching?
2. How do teachers from China describe their transformation as progressive pedagogues over time?
3. How do native English (specialist) teachers describe their transformation as progressive pedagogues over time?

### **Research Design**

This study is a qualitative study to understand the breadth and depth of teachers' experiences in a Mandarin Immersion U.S. school. Specifically, I focused on how both

groups of teachers—CH and ES—may experience the expectations of progressive education and bilingual immersion differently given their unique teacher preparation programs, cultural backgrounds, and teaching philosophies. This study was carried out over the course of three months. I chose interviews as a primary form of data because I wanted to fully explore the teachers' perspectives, as they are responsible for producing and teaching progressive bilingual curriculum. Teacher knowledge is crucial to the future of education as Freema Elbaz (2005) states:

Understanding teaching requires that we pay attention to teachers as individuals and as a group, by listening to their voices and the stories they tell about their work and their lives... The development of a narrative understanding of teaching follows directly from the realization that teachers are central to the development of curriculum and pedagogy (p. 28).

This qualitative research enabled open dialogue making it possible to focus on the whole lives of teachers, as well as listening to their multifaceted backgrounds addressing multidimensional components of their work. This study approached the diversity of experiences from each individual as well as in collective dialogue through two small group focus group sessions with a total of 15 teachers/instructional specialists from Kindergarten to Fifth grade, six semi-structured interviews (three CHT and three ES), teacher documents including personal statements, and cover letters and a written teaching philosophy from their initial hiring and finally, classroom newsletters as supportive documents. The classroom newsletters are sent home weekly by all teachers. The newsletters emphasize student learning, and categorize all subjects, strategies, and photos demonstrating identifiable progressive and bilingual content. I collected and

analyzed 32 newsletters from the teachers who participated in the semi-structured interviews.

As for the interviews, I held six in person recorded individual semi-structured interviews (three CHT and three ES) at the school site. The large focus group comprised of a sample of 15 teachers (including the semi-structured interview participants) to discuss their philosophies, their development as progressive pedagogues and the integration of language. The results brought attention and focus to the wider concerns of teaching in bilingual environments, community of practice, and identity. Moreover, my aim was to add depth to the complexity and possibility inherent in the work of teachers and how their beliefs, values and philosophies change over time within a new and progressive Mandarin immersion program.

The purpose of the focus group was to further discuss similar reflections among a large group of teachers from different levels of experience and grade levels. The focus groups took place first. In this process, my goal was to identify common themes to guide focus for the semi-structured interview conversations. The focus group of fifteen teachers and specialists was broken down into two small groups. The first group took place in April with eight participants in total. The second focus group occurred the same week with seven participants. A focus group session can provide a number of benefits that one on one interview may not expose. For instance, a focus group interview allows room to inspect a certain phenomenon for its basic elements and structure, to unmask, define, and determine an up-close examination (Berg, 2004). To add, conducting focus groups allows opportunities for participants to share and interact in discourse. As Berg (2004) writes, “information from multiple comments, stories, and descriptions that converge in a shared

experience during the focus group allow the phenomenon to be confronted, as much as possible on its own terms” (p. 279). As a moderator, I recorded field notes to record interactions, and notate behaviors of the participants.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to unpack a better understanding of teachers’ stories in their personal and professional lives by bringing their experiences to a larger audience. A series of predetermined questions were sent to the participants prior to interviews; primarily, to question examined pedagogical practices and the reflections of best practices or new insights regarding how they have improved as progressive pedagogues. I also inquired about the participants’ about racial, ethnic, and acculturation to working with international and local colleagues in an immersion school. At the same time, follow up questions were asked to clarify or elaborate during the interview; after which, I analyzed and identified common themes.

Additionally, I asked the three CHT and three ES participants to share at least six Newsletters, which were collected in the first week, mid-month, and last day of the month over the course of the study of April and May months. The Newsletters are sent home each week by the CHT and the ES to demonstrate the topics discussed in class, the skills practiced and strategies used with students. The Newsletter is a document that is created by the teachers about the key events, lessons, and resources for the parents to read as a thorough form of communication. Each grade level sends out a newsletter with details of the week’s lessons and photographs. These letters are written in English and shared with English teachers to assist with editing and revisions prior to sending out to the parent community. I used the Newsletters as a form of data source because teachers can readily provide the data source and it is written in English.



Since the Newsletters are written in English and photographs of the students' academic and social experiences are embedded into the newsletters, I used the documents as supportive evidential documentation to entice reflections, provide evidence of progressive education, in an immersion setting. I read and analyzed each newsletter and asked follow-up questions for clarification if needed to further my understanding of progressive ideology, related reflections, and connections between bridging Chinese and English languages. Additionally, I analyzed the files of the six teachers involved in the interviews to analyze their initial statement of purpose, teaching philosophies, and or any documentation related to their personal and professional experience to identify if there are any changes over time.

Moreover, I was mindful of the participants' dominant language and my personal limitations as someone who does not speak Mandarin. My goal as a researcher and community member is to provide a brave space (Arao & Clemens, 2013) for individuals to reflect on their personal experiences and examine the story of the participants' lived experiences in collaboration at a bilingual immersion school. Additionally, this study encourages critical discourse and awareness about the impact of teaching background, personal identity, and transformative practices within a progressive bilingual immersion setting.

### ***Research Site***

The school site is a historically industrial neighborhood, morphed into a mix of high priced residential housing and artspace due to the ongoing gentrification of the South of Market downtown area of San Francisco. The school is under construction and on a banner outside of the building are the words, "CIM is under construction,

constructing hearts and minds”. The students’ rush inside the doors and different languages can be heard from all over the campus. At the moment the playground is mostly concrete, and a few basketball hoops take up a large portion of the recess activities, but there is a feeling of playfulness and joy on the campus.

CIM’s mission is to “To nurture the young heart and mind in a joyful learning environment, where the convergence of progressive education and Mandarin immersion ignites curiosity, connectedness, and engagement in the world” (CIM, 2018). As a teacher at CIM, I can attest that many of our students do indeed love school. The school’s purpose is to fully immerse students in Mandarin beginning from preschool with an 80% of the learning time spent speaking mandarin through an interdisciplinary model, from songs, to games, to interactive learning. Students learn topics based on the school’s central thematic units called Units of Exploration. This includes content, skills, habits and social-emotional learning through a wide range of projects and inquiry. The program itself is based on immersion and the progressive component meaning CIM’s progressive philosophy is based on Dewey’s principles, such as:

- Attending to the whole child, not just the academics.
- Building a sense of community and collaboration amongst students.
- Social Justice and talking classroom learnings into the wider world to improve the community, both locally and internationally.
- Developing a sense of Deep Understanding and delving into a topic for context and a sense of purpose.

- Active Learning, with students directing the course of inquiry within each unit. All students are encouraged to be self-reflective, formulate questions and think through possibilities.

([www.CIM.org/Our-Educational-Philosophy](http://www.CIM.org/Our-Educational-Philosophy), 2018)

This study was conducted from one specific private independent school in downtown San Francisco, The Chinese Immersion (CIM) School. The tuition for children to attend the preschool or elementary and middle school is \$31,204 a year. However, there is financial assistance for families in need of funding. In its tenth year ranging from classes in Preschool to 8th grade, the school has a growing campus and a growing community.

The Mandarin immersion program draws a diverse group of community members including families and students from U.S. and international contexts. The families and students who make up the school's demographic are a majority of White and Asian-American families. There are a small percentage of families who come from Latin or African-American backgrounds. A number of families travel a long distance from a wide range of Bay Area locations to attend CIM. The entire school's student enrollment exceeds over 390 students with two classes per grade level starting with preschool to seventh grade. The elementary school's student to teacher ratio is 6:1. The instructional time is roughly allotted to be 80% in Mandarin and 20% English instruction in preschool and elementary. The instruction reduces to 50% Mandarin and 50% English instruction at the middle school level. The campus administration is made up of mostly a White majority of leadership. However, as a reflection of the diverse needs of the needs of teachers and staff, in 2018 leadership positions diversified by hiring a native Mandarin

Curriculum Director and an Asian American associate head of school who speaks Mandarin.

The school's site demographic of teachers consists of educators from across the globe as well as locally across the Bay area. The high demand for Chinese language teachers has resulted in the recruitment and hiring of international Chinese language teachers (Lyon, 2018). Resulting in a majority of Chinese language teachers originating from Taiwan or China. Furthermore, all teacher participants were recruited from this specific site. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), increasing the diverse characteristics of sites, the more difficult it will be to find common experiences, themes and overall essence of the experiences for all participants. By reducing the number of sites, the participants will have the opportunity to facilitate the discovery of shared experiences.

### *Selection of Participants*

The participants of this study are two groups of educators at CIM. The first group is the Chinese Homeroom Teachers (CH). Their roles and responsibilities include teaching all academic content areas reading, writing, math, Chinese literacy, units of exploration, and social-emotional learning. All 15 of the CH were born in China, or Taiwan and attended schools in China or Taiwan. All participating CHT were required to learn multiple languages in school, for example, English and Mandarin. Many if not all of the CHT earned teaching degrees in China, or taught in international schools in China with teaching experiences ranging from one year to more than 20 years. All of the CHT participants including the instructional specialists, n=10 attended universities in the U.S. and had prior experience teaching in international schools across China or in the United

States at Chinese bilingual schools. Five of the participants have exclusively taught at CIM.

Currently, because most of the CHT are from China, with a majority of the teachers are here in the states working under the H1B Visas and/or receiving financial and legal support to obtain green cards. However, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, the government's ban on working visas and restrictive immigration policies made it more difficult for teachers to receive H1B Visas and renewal. For the first time in years, there were, and continued to be, several cases when teachers were forced to stop working due to complications with their Visas; all related to the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) changes implemented under the current administration.

The second group is the English Specialists (ES). The group of English Specialist teachers are native to the U.S. and live in San Francisco. All participants of this group attended American universities, and all acquired teaching degrees at the undergraduate or master's level. The levels of experience range from two years in the classroom to over 15 years of teaching in public, private, or independent schools. At CIM, the ES are responsible for teaching English literacy and humanities including reading and language arts, writing skills, and integrating the Units of Exploration in collaboration with the CHT. The immersion model only allows a time of one hour each day four times a week, making the task of teaching all content and curriculum a challenge. However, with coaches and support from the administration, the ES and CHT have support and resources to meet the goals of the school.

Participants of the study included 15 immersion teachers and instructional specialists from CIM. I requested participants to volunteer in this study in December of

2018. The selection of teachers had a range of experience from the Kindergarten level to sixth grade, and instructional specialists who were all lead teachers at one point, and all from the same site CIM. There is tremendous value to collecting data from participants who share a similar experience, as supported by Van Manen, (2014), “most importantly they must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences” (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.1530). The participants ranged in the amount of teaching experience from a minimum of two years to ten or more. I was able to obtain at least one participant who served as a teacher from the first year at CIM. Additionally, all CHT in this study are bilingual if not multilingual. The ES are mostly monolingual with one being bilingual. The program at CIM offers working H1B Visas to all of our international teachers, which does affect their status as working citizens on a yearly basis. The participants, who volunteered to be included, were successfully able to live and work in the U.S. throughout the duration of the study.

As a researcher in my place of work, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Once I received the authorization to move forward with the study, I provided a consent form with the purpose of the study, methodology, time commitments, and potential benefits of the study to each participant. The participation of this study is completely voluntary and for the purpose of confidentiality, each participant was given a pseudonym. For the purpose of certainty, participants were given transcripts of interviews, and participants of the focus groups received a copy as well, to ensure their voices and stories are accurately represented. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the study at any point if they felt it was necessary. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. Since English is

the second language of most of the CIM participants, I offered participants the opportunities to answer my questions in their dominant language of Mandarin, but all participants preferred to answer in English.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection began in April of 2019 and was completed by June 2019. I collected data from the one-on-one interviews, teacher files, focus groups and newsletter documentation. I collected most of the teacher files with personal information from the five of the six teacher volunteers, which include personal statements, teaching philosophies, and cover letters in the month of April and May. Again, from April to May of 2019, I collected 32 newsletters from all participants in the months of April and May. From these documents, I analyzed themes, in addition to an examination of themes from the focus groups. To add, themes and an extensive inquiry of photo evidence and imagery will be analyzed within this period. The chart below is time frame of data collection.

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>Focus Group</b>	With both groups of teachers (N=15) Focus Group A: 8 Focus Group B: 7	45 Minutes	April
<b>Semi-Structured Interviews</b>	N=6 (3: CHT; 3 ES) Using Teacher Files	45 Minutes/each	April-May-June
<b>Teacher File Documents</b>	1 x 6 participants (3: CHT; 3 ES) Actual:5	Teaching Philosophy Cover Letter Personal Statement	April-May
<b>Newsletters</b>	(3: CHT; 3 ES) K-5 G1-6 G2-7 G3-7 G4- 4 G5- 3	Newsletters N = 32	April-May

### **Data Analysis**

To ensure quality data collection, I practiced a systematic data output management process (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. I outsourced the audio recordings to be transcribed by a transcription service, which I then reviewed. Data were collected and monitored for data quality by reviewing transcriptions and consulting with the participants about the accuracy of their statements. Once the data was transcribed, I coded and organized the data by themes. Using organized matrices, I clustered together with similar topics and from these topics into columns that might be arrayed as major topics, unique topics, and leftovers (Roberts, 2010). The method to analyze data was a thorough investigation of the essence of the phenomenon by identifying significant statements and meaning textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2018). All data were analyzed through the lens of the theoretical frameworks of *cultural humility* and *communities of practice* theories, to give participants a venue to share their lived experiences.

### **Reflections**

As a researcher, I also included a reflection of my own process and lessons learned alongside the participants. My positionality as a colleague, a trusted friend, a long time employee of CIM, I have a certain amount of influence that should be taken into account and not ignored. It is also in my best interest to voice the challenges of our past and remark on the reflections of how the community has changed over time. Through this methodology, I hope to provide an abundant set of data addressing the lived experiences



of Chinese teachers and American English specialists living and working in the United States at an elite independent school.

Furthermore, I want to acknowledge this study was conducted primarily in English. This may limit the meaning and context of interviews and focus groups. To expand on the themes and personal experiences, it is my hope that the supporting teacher documents including newsletters, teaching philosophies, cover letters and personal statements granted access to underlying meaning and understanding. Given the limitations of language, it was my goal that through a combination of dialogue and imagery and conversations, the findings of this study demonstrated an accurate portrayal of the participant teachers in a progressive environment.

### **Closing**

Contemporary conversations around the sociopolitical climate of America, forces educators to look inwards as we find new solutions to topics related to language and community. Serving families and students at a bilingual-bicultural institution requires thoughtful reflection about inclusion, immigration, language, and bicultural identities; not to mention the discourse related to progressive movements in our society. I envision that the themes and reflections of this research will empower educators in seeking a more democratic and just world by lifting the voices of teachers collectively from both international and local perspectives. I trust that my passion to ensure that all voices are heard and carried into educational research can make an impact on educational institutions in collaboration with international and local stakeholders, educational policy, protection of rights, and freedoms, to inform the best practices within the education world

and larger systems outside of it. If not to inform, then to gain further inquiries about bilingual education, the art of teaching, and community.

The theoretical framework grounded in *cultural humility* and *communities of practice* provides a lens through which to understand how institutions function as an interconnected community with independent stories and collaboration. These theories are threaded by inquiry, a constant search, and trust between the self and relationships within a community to elevate and educate as a whole. By creating a culture of self-reflection in addition to open dialogue, CIM will continue to define, reshape and explore the endless possibilities of a future unimagined for students, the faculty, and families it seeks to service. This study relies on the foundation that our relationships are an act of creation. As one who engages with others through dialogue and self-reflection, we as teachers will be able to engage and express through actions to influence changes systematically.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This study was designed to explore the lived-out experiences of progressive immersion teachers. It analyzes the pedagogical philosophies and understandings of progressive teaching in a specific or selected bilingual immersion school. The teachers who participated in this study are from both international and American backgrounds. The purpose of this research was to understand how Chinese teachers and American teachers adapted to teaching with both a language immersion school and a progressive approach. The research examines how the teachers from both contextual backgrounds navigate their own teaching experiences and their personal adaptations (transformation) to teach using an integrated model. It was evident through this investigation that all teachers' practices and philosophies changed over time. This meaningful study unveils a peek into the teachers' experiences among one another and individual reflections.

Upon analysis, there were a number of factors that influenced the various experiences of each participant. First, the educational and cultural background differences between the teachers' traditional Chinese educational backgrounds and the American school systems played a role in their reflections. However, as for the individual interviews, all participants had taught exclusively in the United States, therefore, providing pedagogical experiences from years in the American school system. Secondly, all participants ranged in the number of years as a classroom lead teacher from one year to over 15 years of classroom experience. In addition, some of the teachers had only taught at CIM and others had experiences in other public schools, monolingual schools, higher education, or private institutions. Upon that reflection, this study examines the major themes and connections between those facets. Upon the differences in various

backgrounds of each teacher, they each shared experiences and insights that exhibited common trends within this context.

Throughout the study, there were three primary strands that impacted the teachers' pedagogical philosophies and understanding of progressive language education. The first was a cultural understanding and relationships between teachers, which I am referring to as *Dimensions of Mentorship*. Among child-centered learning, mentorships and community reflect one of the founding principles of progressive pedagogy; the integration with and among the community in addition to democratic decision making within schools. All of the participants spoke to the importance of strong community building on a personal level and among colleagues. The institution itself is unique, in that CIM relies on a team-teaching model approach therefore; alignment and communication between English and CHT are pertinent to the development of the program and success of the school/student outcomes.

The second strand, *Apprenticeship to Design Thinking* related to the individual traits described by participants as part of their own philosophical transformative thinking. Progressive educators are flexible and resilient, in order to conduct successful project process management. I have defined the individual traits of a successful educator as the qualities that enable a teacher to be most effective in the curriculum development process. The third strand is jointly shared by the *Development of a Bicultural Growth Mindset*, which I have defined in regard to authentic learning, a shift in paradigm from competitive thinking to recognizing individual cultural growth in thinking, language, and conversation about the impact of cultural curiosity. All of the findings ultimately provide evidence to demonstrate a shift in pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning; the

considerations of each student, and the cultural understanding of what and how to engage in successful innovative learning environments.

Throughout the findings, I have provided personalized descriptions of four participants throughout the findings to give context and background information. The participant teachers vary in number of years teaching, educational backgrounds, and grade levels to engage further into their personal growth. The following vignettes from, Sheng, Hui, Den, and Lisa provide a rich background into their lives and professionalism to give a better understanding of their perspectives.

### **Finding 1: Dimensions of Mentorship**

The emphasis on the dimensions of mentorship is defined as the examination of an individual's intention to seek out relationship building for professional growth. I have found throughout this study and my own personal experiences, there was a spectrum of self-guided mentoring. As an organization, CIM does not formally assign mentors and mentees for new teachers or veteran teachers. In the past, mentorship for new teachers in the English department was loosely encouraged. I have found that due to a lack of formal mentorship programs at CIM, teachers had to restructure and improvise mentorship among their teaching partners and colleagues. Currently, the framework for new teacher and veteran teacher success is reliant on a teamwork model, meaning grade level teaching teams support each other with a facilitator (coach) who guides curriculum development. However, this structure differs from a mentor and mentee relationship. The definition of a mentoring role includes an interaction between the expert and learner with the intention of supporting and facilitating the professional growth of the protégé (Odell & Huling, 2000). Further, the participants of this study described their own collective and

individually formed micro-mentorship communities based on their trust and comfortability among colleagues.

Throughout the interviews, and focus groups, an examination of relationships from the personal to the professional outcomes; concluded there was a considerable need for structured mentorship programs. Many of the teachers examined their relationships with their teaching partners and other colleagues reporting to seek advice for most challenges in teaching practices or personal concerns among several colleagues. According to Pogodzinski, Youngs, & Frank (2013) “Being assigned a mentor or participation in teacher induction have also been found to increase satisfaction, intent to stay and perceptions of working conditions, particularly for new teachers.” Mentorship is critical to professional growth and it begins with a relationship foundation, time, and support.

### *Sheng*

To illustrate, Sheng, identifies as a heterosexual Chinese woman in her early 20s. Sheng described her own educational experiences from her early elementary school years through college as very traditional and competitive. At the time of this study, Sheng worked in the classroom as a lead second-grade Chinese Homeroom teacher. She was trained as an International Baccalaureate Chinese immersion teacher and attended graduate school in New York strengthening her beliefs in progressive teaching practices. Preceding graduate school Sheng taught Mandarin in a dual language school with students from the Kindergarten to second in a diverse public-school setting.

Sheng is gregarious, friendly, and humorous as well. Her passion for art and design are seen woven into the threads of her own teaching style. She is highly perceptive

of her students' academic needs as well as their emotional well-being. As an observer of her teaching style and care, Sheng is flexible as a teammate and always willing to find the best possible solutions for her students and her own well-being as an educator. As her colleague, I have witnessed Sheng's strengths as a problem solver with an attendance to her own reflections as part of her growth as a teacher.

Most importantly, Sheng was a newer teacher to CIM who described her initial thoughts to working in the US as a culture shock. However, she was able to find friendships from the established sense of community and cultural ties among her colleagues. Sheng stated CIM was an incredibly welcoming community and it was easy to establish meaningful relationships. Her ability to bond with good food, travel, and board games were some of her hobbies she shared with many of the teachers.

For instance, in the first focus group, I asked the group to name the ways in which they have participated in building community within the classroom, their professional relationships, or their personal lives. Sheng discussed her needs to find housing in the Bay Area once she was hired. She explained how a residence with other CIM colleagues, was a coordinated effort through HR to help find roommates and build rapport.

SHENG:

"It was hard for me to find a house. But at the time, our school rented a house where all the teachers could live. We had three or four teachers. Moving in with those teachers we built a relationship pretty fast. You feel like there's a community inside. Even though later I moved out I feel like I still have personal contact with the preschool teachers. I think that's a great way to feel welcomed as a new teacher." [Sheng, Focus Group, 4.5.2019]

Sheng helps us understand that the administrator's supported incoming teachers to find residence and assisted new teachers to find a home to rent. Sheng felt a sense of community within her household built in from their time together, which lasted far beyond their living situation. Several years after moving out she explains that her relationships with her roommates carried into classroom relationships. The administrative decisions and human resources initiative to provide residential options is unique and follows a trend in educational reform. For example, according to Gatlin, (2009) a program described as the urban teacher residency was developed in response to teacher shortages. The mentorship program created promising opportunities for new teachers to connect, pedagogical training, educational theory, and application in the context of a classroom through a year-long term. Sheng is describing how her pedagogical practice and integration into the community improved due to the supportive community of her colleagues.

### *Lisa*

Another example of relationship building, and mentorship is from an instructional coach, named Lisa. Lisa was a classroom teacher for three years before being hired as the instructional coach for Chinese homeroom teachers. Lisa was new to her role and was excited to work alongside teachers.

Lisa grew up in China and like many of her colleagues grew up in a highly competitive traditional schooling environment. High stakes testing and teacher centered frameworks were implemented throughout her entire educational experience. Prior to her role as Instructional Coach, Lisa spent 7 years in the Mandarin immersion classroom in California, Illinois and Michigan. Lisa holds a Bachelors Degree in Teaching Chinese as



a Second Language from Nanjing in China and a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction from Michigan State University.

Lisa is thoughtful in her approaches to coaching teachers and working closely with administrators. I had the privilege to work with Lisa when she was a classroom teacher in previous years. Her attention to a truly creating a student-centered environment was evident in the student voice and choice of classroom projects. Similarly, to many of the teachers on CIM's campus, Lisa is incredibly dedicated to her work and as a classroom teacher. For Lisa in particular, I noticed she would spend long hours before and after school to craft intentional lessons for her individual students.

Additionally, her dedication to her teaching practice allowed Lisa to become an Instructional Coach after two years of teaching at CIM. Prior to that time, CIM functioned without instructional coaches and heavily relied on the teaching community for professional advice and mentorship. Lisa's role also includes connecting CIM to the wider Chinese language professional community by giving tours on campus and school visits.

Overall, Lisa facilitates grade-level meetings from grades 3-5, among five teachers per grade level meetings; sometimes up to six teachers to align and discuss lesson plans, unit plans, and set goals for each teacher. Lisa who was once a classroom teacher understands the challenges and needs for support as a homeroom foreign language teacher. Her new role outside of the classroom, as well as her facilitation in building rapport among the English specialist teachers and the homeroom teachers in grade-level meetings, was a strategic administrative decision to align the English and Chinese language curriculum.

She was one of the first participants to volunteer for this study and share her thoughts about building relationships and community in our first focus group. Lisa was eager to participate in the study because of our personal relationship as colleagues. Lisa shares her perspective on her role to address community needs through as a team facilitator.

“Since I facilitated level teams at the beginning of the year, I created time and space; common core values for activities, teams; get to know each other. Values can be an anchor for ups and downs. This can be something that can guide us.” [Lisa, Focus Group B, 4.2.19]

She and several other teachers mentioned the importance of personal relationships and the need for support as new teachers. As Lisa stated, “creating common core values” meaning she allowed all teachers she mentored to create meeting norms within the groups. Lisa would address things that were going well in classrooms and ask her colleagues to share anything that was on their minds before lesson planning or other agenda items were addressed. Lisa is responsible for feedback to both new and veteran teachers, she and two other coaches (Sloan and Jinsha) involved in this study are able to connect teachers across grade levels.

As part of my field notes and observations, there was a gap in coaching and instruction roles; therefore, the positions of instructional coaches were created in the 2017-2018 school year. A curriculum director was created in 2019 as a response to the need for teacher support in a number of curriculum and mentorship capacities. Up until that point, teachers were leaning heavily on the expertise of their veteran teaching peers and worked in more isolated quarters. This new position allowed for a mentorship system

in place and accountability on teachers and coaches; who were once in homeroom classroom positions and understood their needs as classroom teachers.

In response, classroom teachers were able to receive feedback and guidance to shape the curriculum, support for classroom management strategies, and technical skills to grow and improve as instructors in their practice. Lisa's cultural and linguistic identity as a Chinese, native Mandarin speaker, is critical to the connection of the community of which she assists. The administration also acknowledges the critical shift in creating more diversity and representation in leadership positions. It is an understatement to say that representations matter, her role to work in leadership as a person who represents the group, she directly collaborates with provides insight into the reflective choices of the administration and the school board.

During a separate one on one interview, I discussed work habits and mentorship with Yumei. Yumei, also a veteran teacher, with over ten years of classroom experience and served at CIM for over eight years has a background in progressive education due to her graduate studies from Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. Her response to teamwork and mentoring is based on her experience with a constant reflection of trial and error. Give and take peer feedback is effective in this case.

"Our school is a new model so a lot of things are new and you need to experience it and try it. Having a co-teacher just makes all the trying new things become easier for us because you feel we can support each other. If you make a mistake I can help you, and if I make a mistake you can help me. It's a supportive system. I feel that's really good. Also, it depends on the person. If you match with a

reasonable planner and a responsible planner, that's a fantastic experience for you." [Yumei, Interview, 5.9.2019]

The teaching model structure at CIM involves a unique two-teachers to 22 students; the teacher to student ratio of 6 to 1. However, learning how to share the responsibility of lessons, balance workload, and cohesion between multiple people can be difficult. Yumei is speaking to the growth mindset by experiencing new methods and not being afraid to fail because there is a “supportive system” in place. Her shift in thinking about “depending on the person” insinuates that partnerships and co-teaching models can be challenging if the relationship does not “match” your systems or workflow. Planning is a tremendous task and cooperation, mentorship, all take place during team planning for unit and lesson plan design between the CHT and the English specialists.

### **Peripheral Mentorship**

As part of the concepts discussed was the use of sharing classroom spaces. Ultimately the use of shared space created a form of communication and influence in teaching and learning. I was interested in how the use of shared classroom spaces impact the level of guidance through something I am naming as, *Peripheral Mentorship*. I am defining peripheral mentorship as guidance provided by a colleague through physical environmental proximity or spacial influence. The mentor may not be fully aware of their influence, but the learner adapts to their environment and evolves in the actual practice of their profession. *Peripheral Mentorship* is in alignment with sociocultural theory's notion of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (LPP) which describes how new or less experienced members eventually grow into expertise with increased participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the individual interviews and focus

groups, I was able to ask Chinese Homeroom Teachers and English Teachers about their use of space and collaboration as language teachers. Throughout each interview, I found nearly all teachers reported overwhelmingly positive results from pushing into classrooms and overlapping routines to teaching content as closely related as possible. Being in isolation is a reality for many teachers. Often it can feel like there isn't enough support to execute all of the needs of each individual student, especially as a new teacher.

Among several interviews to discuss her thoughts on mentorships was Hui, a veteran teacher with six years of teaching. As a native Mandarin speaker and Chinese Homeroom Teacher, she was trained as an immersion teacher in the US. Hui's teaching career as a lead teacher gave her a wide perspective due to her range of experience from Mandarin immersion environments from the public school context to independent private school schools as a lead teacher.

### *Hui*

Hui identifies as a heterosexual, Chinese woman also in her early 20s. Similarly, to Sheng, Hui recalls the Chinese education system as very traditional and rigorous. Hui commented on the highly competitive environment that was and still is deeply valued in her family and within her culture. Her recollections of the teacher as an authoritative disciplinarian were typical in her years in school. Hui is from a small island where she learned to value education due to her family's line of teachers. Hui stated that she was always interested in teaching because of the many people in her family who were teachers including her parents, uncles, and grandparents. Hui shared that her upbringing on an island was very simple and she because of its limited options in furthering her career she was encouraged to pursue a higher degree in the United States. Hui decided to

move to America and received scholarships to attend a study in Minnesota. She graduated with a master's degree and became certified as a dual language instructor at the elementary-high school level.

Hui began her years at a public dual language school teaching Mandarin. Her reflections on the school and teaching students from backgrounds unlike her own was a cultural shock. Hui expressed gratitude about her previous teaching partners because they were able to explain cultural norms and reflect on her students as learners. Hui was extremely humbled by the number of cultural differences between each person and beliefs, values and social groupings. In Hui's free time, she often enjoyed traveling, learning new languages, and socializing with her peers. From my observations of Hui, she was one of the most dedicated teachers I had ever met. Not only was Hui willing to stay on campus for hours past the time students had left, she was actively engaging in extra activities and willing to help her colleagues at any moment. Hui offered her theories about continual growth in her position and spoke to the need for support in this area of mentorship and collaboration.

"Because it's not like teaching Chinese, it's not like ... not like teaching at a Chinese school. The foundation is American teaching ... education system. And then, you fill in something, but we're not quite familiar or not quite professional in that part. We need all your input, also your experience, to communicate with the parents, the teachers, and also the students. There's always more for us to learn. "  
[Hui, interview, 6.3.2019].

A focus on the use of space is a critical piece to how members of the community negotiate and make use of physical proximity as a tool for organization and

communication. Hui, and Yumei are experienced teachers with over five years of teaching experience and number of years at CIM. Their perspectives are generally positive in terms of how the physical spaces work well for them and integrating language classes, and their teaching teams. The participants with the most classroom experience found that the advantages of working in the same physical classroom outweighed the disadvantages. For example, the homeroom teachers found that the content shared in the classroom helped the classroom teachers to “communicate” or reinforce content and classroom behavior expectations, which would allow the homeroom teachers and English specialists to support and strengthen the lessons and support a cohesive teaching environment.

Another piece of Hui’s comment about “American teaching...education system, communicating with parents, students.” is referring to her reflection and cultural experiences to contrasting cultural norms from a Chinese background to relying on the guidance through the “American” education systems, and cultural understanding. According to Hargreaves and Fullan, (2000) “Good mentorship involves helping teachers work effectively with adults-- being sure (as a professional community) of their own judgments while also being open and responsive to the opinions of others” (p. 53). Teaching is a fast-paced environment where working with students and parent relationships are built upon mutual understanding and clear communication to work effectively.

Although, there are many challenges for even expert or veteran teachers navigating the dual language and progressive approach, sharing classroom spaces and allowing teachers to use a common space as a reference for bilingual interaction, assists

all teachers involved in the learning process. As a result of this study, both international teachers and specialist teachers found positive outcomes by sharing the same physical classroom spaces. They both engaged in approaches to mentoring merely by physically being in the same room. However, more research must be evaluated and expanded as the program and model itself is an underdeveloped area of study.

Exploring this paradigm further, Dominic—a veteran teacher with over a decade of instructional experience—responds to his active responsibility in peripheral mentorship. He is currently a lower school English specialist teacher. His teaching style and approaches to learning are rooted in his background from Teachers College, Columbia University, and New York University where Dominic spoke of his influencers as “progressives” themselves. For instance, Lucy Calkins, Louise Derman-Sparks, and Diane Ravich were a few of his mentors. Dominic was able to express his background in progressive education by emphasizing growth through reflection, which is also one of the foundational principles at CIM.

"...just being willing to keep going and learning from my colleagues. Not just my English team colleagues, but my whole school community and faculty. Watching them and saying, ‘Oh, this works. I'm going to try it out’ and not being afraid to take chances, which is probably something I was less inclined to do when I had my own self-contained classroom." [Dominic, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019].

Dominic was hired and participated in this study in his first year at CIM. He quickly demonstrated his commitment to his team by developing a mutual learning exchange with his teaching partners. He has the energy and dynamism that adds value to the relationships he has made with many of the community of teachers on campus. Many,



if not all of the participants identify as lifelong learners. The communities of practice theory asserts, “it is because practice is a process of interactive learning to start with that enables newcomers to insert themselves into existing communities (Lave, 1991, p.277). Hence, Dominic’s adaptability to the teaching community from the beginning was an established community that learned to inform each other, provide agency for each other, and transform each other. Since there is an absence of a mentor-mentee programs in place at CIM; the teachers collectively used peripheral and peer mentoring. These dimensions of mentorship demonstrate collective trust, environmental learning, and relationship building. Such a process is critical for creating a sustainable and supportive community.

Furthering the dimensions of mentorships, Den, a new English teacher this year submitted her personal statement as part of data collection. She wrote about looking forward to building relationships with mentor teachers and added that her perspective into teaching began with the influential colleagues around her at the time:

“Our teachers have been my most valuable resource since I started working. I told them I wanted to become a teacher and they have given me so much advice, as well as asking me to be a helper so that I have more exposure to the daily workings of a classroom.” [Den, Personal Statement, April 2019].

One observation that certainly holds true to many of the teachers was a sense of belonging. The participants were familiar with bonding over travels to professional development conferences, returning to share newly learned material, day to day connections based on simple anecdotes about the progress of certain students, developing curriculum throughout the year, across grade levels within the school itself, and through

daily interactions. As for a more casual approach to connections and building relationships, many teachers mentioned getting together for dinners and happy hours outside of work.

Of utmost importance is the amount of time built into the schedule to plan and communicate with teaching partner teachers. Instilling a culture of community is critical for any language immersion and progressive programs in the future. According to the participants of this study, many of the comments applied to a larger focus of community or peer mentorship. A study based on teacher mentorship and the culture of a community, argues to cope with uncertainty and replacing, create a climate of risk-taking and develop a stronger sense of teacher efficacy (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). It is clear that the participants are interested in the collaboration and seeking mentorship across the social landscape.

### *Den*

Den identifies as a heterosexual Asian American woman who and “Chinese-American” who is “Americanized”. Den is a new teacher who at this point, was in her first year of teaching as an English Specialist teacher. She grew up in the Bay Area, understanding a lot of the Chinese traditional values, not necessarily believing in it, but knowing the origins of these belief systems. She visited China frequently, but never stayed for prolonged periods of time. Through this cultural duality, Den deeply understands the unique cultural exposure of many of her students who can relate to bring raised bilingual and bicultural. Many of whom are raised with relatable traditional Chinese values, and cultural foundations. Although, one major difference is her

educational experiences growing up in public schools, versus the affluent community of students she serves today.

Den's educational background and familiarity with her community exposed her to the pressures of high stakes testing and traditional teacher centered frameworks. Den's experience, similar to her colleagues grew up in what they describe as "traditional schooling" meaning testing, data driven teaching, and teacher centered model. However, Den described a pronounced difference in her social awareness of American public schools. Differentiated by the diverse student population and her exposure to Black and Brown communities. Stating that her awareness of the student population and the state of education at the time, motivated her to become a teacher herself to better the (school) system. During our interview, Den demonstrated her concerns and passions about the political social awareness of her colleagues and students alike. It is because of Den's experiences in the Bay Area public school system, she brings an of awareness to systemic inequities and social justice into her teaching practice.

### *Researcher's Perspective on Dimensions of Mentorship*

In the initial stages of CIM my instinct as a new member was to understand the innerworkings of the teaching community. At first, there was a distinct separation between the English teaching team and the Chinese Language teachers. However, in 2017, the Head of School designed a schedule that allowed all language teachers to collaborate and create a more cohesive language program. We planned together, which gave all teams small working groups and time to make personal connections. Many of the teachers were open about their concerns in terms of how to implement lessons, how to

talk to parents, or simply connect with students. My participation with several grade levels gave me the opportunity to help build and develop social cohesion.

My colleagues and I were able to address accomplishments and discuss challenges, which often happened in the hours after school of my classroom. I found that the quite literal open door to my room was one of the biggest reasons many teachers stopped by to say hello or air their concerns. Throughout my years as an educator, still to this day, consider one of my roles as a teacher advocate. I have learned from others to find my voice as a leader and to ask questions. In turn, I learned to help many of the new teachers with their questions, uncertainties, and provided resources when I had the opportunity. Reflecting on my experiences, I understood the importance of mentorship and knew that I could find the same guidance and help from a number of teachers on staff.

We understood an unspoken commonality, which was that we were the experts in this field and invested ourselves in the process of building our own resources. Bringing teachers voices to the center of education is critical. Recording their personal experiences further validates the significance of teacher testimony, especially educators from international backgrounds.

### **Finding 2: Apprenticeship into Design Thinking**

Teachers spoke to the importance of refining (reflecting upon) their philosophies of teaching and digging deeper into CIM's progressive bilingual framework. The participants echoed flexibility and approaches to design thinking. García and Sylvan, (2011) argue that "bilingualism in education must emerge from the meaningful interaction of students with different linguistic backgrounds and their educators, instead

of solely being handed down to educators as language policy and educators must negotiate sense-making instructional decisions, moment by moment” (p. 391). Through this progressive model, authentic learning and autonomy from the teachers are pertinent to bilingual success. Through the data collection process, I was able to discover how specific teaching skills such as flexibility, curriculum design, and process project management contributed to personal and collective essential teaching skills.

I posed a question regarding the essential skills as teachers and which skills were most important within this context. For the teachers in Focus Group A and B, the room appeared to take a collective glance at one another. Some of the teachers in the room had been teachers there at CIM since its inception in the elementary program. The observation was subtle but noticeable enough to understand the amount of resilience and insight into the difficulty of building a program. For the others, it was their first or second year and their responses were still quite similar.

Yumei, a veteran teacher who was in Focus Group B, spoke to her interactions with students and the amount of patience with herself she needed to address. Progressive teaching and inquiry-based curriculum require careful planning. For instance, creating lessons are often flexible, because of the student-centered approach to learning; she said a lot of her planning would need to be adjusted daily. Her years at CIM taught her to use the students as her guide versus forcing the content in one specific teacher-centered approach. The most frequent answers were about being open-minded, and flexible.

“I feel like a lot of the times it's like you have to adjust your lesson plan according to student response and student's interest. I feel that's, going back to the previous question, the previous question was what's the difference between a first-

year teacher and then right now. I feel like when I first started, I'm like "this is my lesson plan, I planned this this this". I want to finish my lesson plan. Now, I'm like "this is my lesson plan but I'm open to change according to my students' interest and response". [Yumei, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019].

Yumei demonstrates her own ability to be flexible with students, observe their behaviors, and collect data from students to adjust lessons as she moves forward. Her transformation as an effective teacher over time shows how her initial first years were focused on writing linear lessons with less student focus. However, her experiences with progressive theories and practices provide her the tools to be more flexible with her approaches. She demonstrates that her previous pedagogical methods were less inclined to change according to her students' interests and responses.

The following newsletter excerpt demonstrates flexibility in framing the unit titled, Wonderworks. The student-led task-based unit through the passion projects without a set curriculum had some success in grade 3 as a pilot unit. Later, the unit was implemented as a school-wide K-6 curriculum design in 2017-19. This completely student-led passion project was influenced by a framework of progressive innovative authentic learning. Since the challenges outweighed its sustainability presented through Wonderworks, a large scale progressive unit; teachers ultimately reflected upon the lessons learned and skills gained new insight into how to balance progressive education and language acquisition through this experience.

Newsletter Communication:

This week marked the beginning of 'Wonderworks'. We will spend the next five weeks focusing on a passion project. Teachers are facilitating students to choose a

topic they are interested in, create a question and use research and or design thinking to make a product that will be used as a multimedia resource in our school library. We refined and edited our questions to develop a main and sub-question set that will guide our research. In order to develop our questions, we asked our students questions like: Is this question or idea worth researching and or knowing? Does this question help you or others to learn more? Is it possible for you to take responsible action to research this question? Is it possible for you to consider others' points of view on this question? We then used a driving question framework template and a brainstorming product session to individually decide our main research questions. All of the children are excited to move into the next phase of the project next week. [Kindergarten Newsletter, May 2019].

The data provides evidence of considerable student-centered and individual project design. However, from field notes and observations about Wonderworks unit, it was considered one of the most challenging unit designs. The level of language ability and approach to the larger task-based project for a Kindergarten level was far more academically advanced than what kindergarten students were able to produce independently. The design of the experimental unit caused stress for both teachers and students because teachers were unable to meet the needs of each student. The ultimate decision to remove this unit from the curriculum and switch to Project Based Learning for the 2019-2020 school year, was due to the reflective practices of the school. The challenge for (task-based) progressive and language immersion approach is accommodating all students with differentiated grade-level appropriate resources available in Chinese, which is still a challenge.

As part of the data collection, Jinsha who is a veteran teacher with over 10 years of classroom experience from both public and independent school experience gave an example of becoming more flexible:

"The biggest thing that changed me is to make me way more flexible than I used to be. When I was teaching in the public school, you know the setting. One teacher and then you have your own classroom. You take care of those, about 30 kids. So you are teaching on an island. So I feel like you are the dictator, you're very rigid and you want to plan things out and you want to execute it.... You have a great team, you have a coach. It's all teamwork and you feel like you're not giving every day. So in public school, I feel like, "Oh, I'm draining. I'm giving my kids all these things and I have no one to talk to and I don't know what to do. I have to just power through it." But here, when you're really freaking out, you have someone to talk to." [Jinsha, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019]

The statements made by Jinsha are reminiscent of my own experiences in public schools. The level of isolation and the responsibilities as the only teacher for a large classroom is a reality for many public school teachers in the United States. Her perspective on public school classroom teaching about feeling “drained,” questioning your professional choices, and “powering through” are all too familiar as I was once a public school teacher. However, it also speaks to the insurmountable privileges that independent private schools have, including CIM, in terms of resources, time, and systems in favor of a student-centered curriculum. The “rigidity” in terms of classroom management for a teacher ratio of 1 to 30 change when the number of teachers and coaches are available.



Another teacher, Amelia, who is a novice teacher, experienced the project-based learning approach and wonderworks with the process rather than the final product in mind. I appreciated her enthusiasm for working on projects. She emphasized her favoritism to the approach to learning and her supportive stance in the importance of the project versus the product.

"As a teacher I really value projects. I feel like students can really learn from different projects that they can choose different topics. They have the flexibility of just choosing what fits them. Also, what they want to get out of the projects. I'm glad that CIM also values projects. We've been doing projects since kindergarten, and maybe preschool as well, but I'm not quite sure. Yeah, I just feel like students have a lot of hands-on opportunities from these projects. Most students really engage in different projects. Engage mainly in the process."

[Amelia, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019]

This nuanced approach to learning and project management within the community supports the communities of practice theory. For example, according to Wenger, (1998) communities of practice have a life cycle that reflects a process such as coming together, developing, evolving, and forming social energy of their learning. Furthermore, the approach to progressive learning and implementation is ultimately an open process.

Another example is from Lisa who was in the same focus group and reiterated the “curious mind” as a teaching skill. Always be willing to learn alongside the student. In a changing world, it is important for a progressive teacher or facilitator to be on the cutting edge of theory and practical application.

"Coming in with a very curious mind and ready to learn new things, because progressive education is one of the areas about basically letting students construct their own knowledge, and also based on a lot of their interests. So a lot of times, we need to learn together with the students. Students might choose something that we don't really know, and we need to be a little bit ahead of them and learn the things that they would like to learn." [Lisa, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019]

In terms of the learning process, Lisa is describing the vulnerability that teachers anticipate within this framework. Project based learning is about identifying a real-world question and applying the students' curiosity to build practical knowledge. Like many teachers facilitating project design, Lisa would spend hours investigating different topics well into hours of her personal time. This included finding resources for her students to spark critical thinking and problem solving.

### ***Researcher's Perspective on Apprenticeship to Design Thinking***

Apprenticeship into design thinking addresses several components to the teacher curriculum design perspective. Authenticity was a key component to motivate student task-based learning, and as CIM works to refine the curriculum, teachers were able to identify various successes and design challenges of an effective progressive language program. The challenges many teachers had in this case of authentic learning was the inability to find leveled texts for students and teachers to use as anchor texts in their target language. It was common for teachers to find resources for students in English, which they often translated into Mandarin, and made into accessible books or videos for their students' use. However, the amount of time spent creating resources related to

specific individual topics for students at their individual readable levels was a constant struggle for teachers and students.

In 2018, the Mandarin Literacy specialist position was created as part of a solution to support grade level teams create unique subject are leveled books for students. There continues to be a tremendous gap in resources for students at the elementary level attempting to investigate topics with narrow scope of target language resources. As part of a solution to increase levels of student learning and teacher efficacy, CIM adopted Project-Based Learning from the Buck Institute. CIM currently uses their framework to implement a reimagined progressive Mandarin language program. The framework allows teachers to plan and execute task based authentic designs, with research-based skills. Many teachers including me, found the framework useful, however, teachers crafted individualized designs that appropriately suited their own Mandarin classroom setting.

### **Finding 3: Developing a Bicultural Growth Mindset**

The study focuses on personal beliefs and shifts in teacher attitudes towards learning and teaching. A bicultural growth mindset includes a pedagogical learning approach to help students understand a depth of cultural learning and language learning. This includes a teachers' shift in paradigm from competitive thinking to individualized cultural growth in thinking, language, and the impact on classroom community culture. For example, taking notice of individual student growth (social-emotional/ academic), learning with the students, and modeling a bicultural growth mindset. At the elementary level, classroom management is critical to instilling routine and cooperation among young students. Teachers in the position of implementing task-based learning, recognize that students will be working in groups, and a level of order and organized chaos that

progressive teaching offers is to be expected. It can be quite difficult to execute student choice, and projects in a second language. However, the reflections from several teachers, their newsletters, and documents provide evidence that gives teachers the opportunity to practice integrating their new ways of knowing with their ways of being. For example, years of personal experience through an education system shapes your cultural beliefs and attitudes towards learning. Sheng, provided a specific example of how her paradigm of teaching and student learning outcome shifted:

"growth, for me, and it's in each individual students' growth. So that should be our focus throughout the program, including academic and socio-emotional. So for me growing up in a very traditional education system in China, and it's always judged by your score and how you did academically, and you are compared with your classmates, and there's a ranking. With that background and going into a progressive education environment, it's really changing me as a teacher and also as a learner. I don't need to compare myself to others. I know I'm on my way to my goal, but as long as I'm growing, it's good. So I have that attitude with my students too. If you are improving, it's all good; you can improve at your own pace and everyone can have their own interest, own direction." [Sheng, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019]

Sheng is demonstrating how her personal background growing up in the Chinese education system is a stark contrast to the progressive educational environment. Sheng also stated that her background and responsibilities as a student were focused on scores and a ranking. She mentions how her role as a progressive immersion teacher is "really

changing me as a teacher and also as a learner.” Students in this type of environment are allowed a number of privileges including, sharing of ideas, independence, and the ability to access the resources and time to understand social-emotional growth.

Changing Sheng’s own theories about what and how classroom academic expectations can change according to the level of comfortability a teacher has with the freedom to track growth versus competitive systems and expectations by changing her own perspective. By making growth the students are assessed throughout the process to make sure specific benchmarks are being met depending on the specifics of each child. However, Sheng understood the importance of individual growth at the academic and social-emotional components of learning, which are critically important to the program. Internalizing the idea that not needing to compete with others, rather making incremental progress in a specific area allows Sheng to support her students with a positive attitude about her role and approaches to growth and learning. Sheng allowed old beliefs to evolve by reducing the rigidity of her practice. Providing her students opportunities to demonstrate growth in alignment with her responsibility as a teacher and trusting the process.

Another example comes from Den, an American born Chinese teacher who works as an English specialist who can relate to both the identity of having a duality in identity Chinese, and American. As a less experienced ES teacher, she mentions some of the invaluable lessons she learned regarding the assumptions and preparations involved in curriculum and lesson planning design. The following quote from Den describes learning with the students:

“My teaching, which is still developing, because I think I tried to plan so much, and I think I was really thrown off by what the kids were able to do and what I expected them to be able to do. I thought I had covered my bases by talking to the 3rd-grade teachers, looking at their old assessments, and doing my due diligence, but when I actually got to know them as people, and of course, it's been a whole summer, they changed. It was just completely different from what I expected.”

[Den, Interview, May 9, 2019].

In my personal experience, after years of teaching in both the public and the private schools, I know the first years of teaching were made up of moments that caused me to question my professional career choices. However, like Den, being prepared in one manner does not necessarily mean you are prepared for the unexpected dynamics of a new classroom. Her experience demonstrates how teaching develops and is shaped by our experiences. For instance, her assumptions that classroom dynamics and preparations involved were arranged were completely different once she engaged with students. Den's position to adapt to her students was a learned experience, which came from her ability to learn about them and learn with them as students with different needs, various strengths, and each person as a unique individual.

Furthermore, project-based learning is designed to develop critical thinking, inquiry, and problem solving therefore, teachers may not know all the answers to all the questions asked. The participants expressed developing comfortability with unpredictability. In our first focus group, I asked the participants to share their thoughts on the most important lessons learned from your experiences as a progressive immersion

teacher. Sloan, the Mandarin Literacy Specialist, shared her thoughts on what it means to be a progressive teacher.

"I think one important thing for me to be a teacher at a progressive school is being *ready to learn with the students*. At the beginning when I first came to this school I was freaking out because I got this kind of topic about adaptation. I was thinking, I'm not an expert in this kind of area. How do I teach this? It can be fun if you are ready to learn with the students. When you are gathering the resources, that's the process to learn. When you are thinking of how to scaffold the students, this is your learning process as well." [Sloan, Focus Group A, 4.2.2019]

Separately, in an interview, Hui, a CH, was asked to share her thoughts on the same topic, which she used her experiences as a student in China to frame how she behaves like a teacher now.

" In China, I feel like in China we used to think that the teacher, the teachers, has to be the ... The model, what teachers say is always right. And then, we're afraid of letting kids argue with you. "You are wrong." And then, also afraid of the kids telling you that you are wrong. But here because sometimes, some of the kids, what they answer, I really don't know. And I can just be honest with them and say, "Yeah, it's a good question. I need to do some research, and then tomorrow I will get back to you." It's okay." [Hui, Interview, 6.3.2019]

An important transformative practice for teachers' continued success is to discuss their readiness to learn with the students. In progressive models, teachers balance the role as a source of knowledge. To act in an honest manner with honest not having all of the knowledge in the room and allowing students to discover it on their own. To add to the

vulnerability through self-reflection, Sloan and Hui mention their feelings of fear of the unknown. Sloan shares her initial sense of worry about not knowing how to teach adaptation to a group of students and Hui explains a cultural experience from China where the teacher is always right. In most traditional models of education, the teacher is “always right.” The transformative thinking here is that these teachers have been allowed and even encouraged to tell students that they don’t know the answer. They also acknowledge evidence good question, to model curiosity and provide resources and information to facilitate authentic learning. The following example is from a newsletter demonstrating a flexible bicultural growth mindset:

Students worked on developing their driving questions and collaborating with each other to generate sub-questions about their topics. They learned first-hand that working in two languages presents its own challenges and provides a unique perspective. Translation isn’t a word-by-word process, and students had to think hard to explain the essence of their projects, using the vocabulary available to them in each language. As they begin to think about their projects in homeroom and English class, they are developing their flexible bilingual mindsets, and thinking deeply about what their project is really about. I am excited to learn with them as we dive into this unique project. [Grade 5 Newsletter, May 2019]

This teacher examined the skills addressed for that specific week upon interweaving reflections of observations in the classroom. The entire process behind learning two languages and process thinking require skillful patience which is necessary to model bicultural and bilingual growth mindset for students. Mentioning they are



“excited to learn with them,” provides further evidence to the notion of being a continual learner.

Finally, Sonia, who identifies as Chinese, and at the time of this study, Sonia was a math teacher in the lower elementary school. She was friends with many of the teachers on campus and was well known for her gregarious attitude and welcoming nature. Sonia attended USF and combined her background in human rights education with ways of understanding bicultural identities. Sonia mentions bicultural awareness, which is a significant aspect of multilingual institutions. Her insights into the program address important focuses on language acquisition, and bicultural identity understanding.

"Open minded. Since it's bilingual education, but also it's not just the linguistic thing. Not only the students but especially the teachers should be bilingual and bicultural. Not just teaching the language, also to combine it with a different culture. Like how we should deliver this message to the students with the two different cultures." [Sonia, Focus Group B, 4.5.2019]

She believes this could be how teachers should be developing bilingual learning and bicultural education. Her point to deliver the message by considering two different cultures is critical for the staff. Sonia's comment alludes to the idea that both teachers and the administration should provide more emphasis on students understanding bicultural identity and the language used to understand the purpose of attending an immersion school. The commodification of language learning as a critical skill to have and not consider how culture impacts a community is a significant point. Throughout the year, there are cultural celebrations, however, the question of how to teach bicultural understanding is not yet clear, especially to teachers.

### *Researcher's Perspective on Developing a Bicultural Growth Mindset*

The attributes necessary for cultural humility entails, self-awareness, openness and being egoless, self-reflection and engaging in supportive interactions in a professional setting and beyond (Foronda et al., 2016 as cited in Tschape, 2018). At the beginning of my career at CIM, as an honest reflection of my own teaching and cultural naivety, I found myself siloed and limited from working with the Chinese teachers. There was a natural inclination to stay in my classroom and focus on my individual objectives. Whether or not it was innate to gravitate towards people with the same cultural background as me, I was unaware of the social norms built into the fabric of the school's culture.

My first years as an English specialist I observed segregated work environments between the small English department and the larger Chinese Homeroom teaching partnerships. There were specific cultural aspects to the school that I quickly had to learn as a new member. For instance, I had to learn and work on how to best communicate with different teachers who were perpetually late dropping of students or picking them up too early. I then, started to fall into the habit and acknowledged this was a school-wide problem; though minor, it was an issue, nonetheless. Time management, depending on the culture or individual was a school-wide cultural issue all teachers had to strengthen. One of the solutions required an openness to feedback, consistent communication, and self-awareness.

Truly appreciating one another's cultural beliefs, attitudes and general relationships takes time and personal responsibility. Building community within a school environment requires opportunity for authentic interactions, which then transmits

understanding and inquiry. One of the most effective ways CIM was able to facilitate relationship building and culture was through food. At its most basic level, CIM's staff celebrations involving food brought every person on campus together for nourishment and opportunity personal connection. Discussing traditional foods from different regions, would then lead to family traditions and a litany of beliefs, habits as roundtable conversations. By increasing the likelihood of cultural discovery, it was critical to provide community building opportunities. Curating growth necessary for members to build supportive interactions for necessary for cultural education and a bicultural growth mindset.

Within an international cultural understanding in an international city, communication is key to a successful program. I have experienced the firsthand effects of excellent teaching practices based on creating communities of practice through authentic engagement. One of the most positive and well-intentioned practices, was a social committee, which I was a part of. As a reflection of the positive impact this committee had on the teaching community, I found the integration of my personal experience relevant.

There were several members of this committee, we named, The Sunshine Committee, dedicated to celebrating employees of CIM whether it was holidays, birthday celebrations, festivals, or holiday events. The Sunshine Committee was well known for bringing joy and intentionally curating a sense of welcoming. It was valued by all staff members because of its personalized efforts to recognize individuals and the whole community. It fundamentally brought people together to begin new traditions. The committee spent hours outside of work without additional pay to encourage strong

community bonds, which was well received. I was struck by the number of positive remarks we received from our efforts. The successes of the Sunshine Committee boosted teacher morale and gave energy back into its teachers and staff. It was equally important for us as professionals to work together, but to also engage in developing positive authentic social experiences together.

My own experience formalized strong relationships among other teachers and helped further partnerships on a personal level in both small community groups and on a larger scale. Social committees demonstrate how relevant, teacher led initiatives solidified a supportive community. The goals of this committee reinforced a space where teachers felt validated, their presence mattered, and extending interactions to encourage relationships.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study indicated that there was a deep sense of community among the diverse group of instructors. Community is rooted in every aspect of life and is impacted by the cultural understandings and values between members of that environment. Through the lens of cultural humility, Tervalong and Murray-Garcia, (1998) and communities of practice, Wenger, (1998) describe, “learning is the engine of practice, and practice is the history of that learning. As a consequence, communities of practice have life cycles that reflect such a process” (p. 96). Similarly, cultural humility suits educators as a tool to analyze their own professional responsibilities to reflect on their attitudes, interactions, behaviors in a diverse environment. The major findings of this study were in line with the reflective nature of progressive pedagogy and the skillful

art of teaching; including the need for mentorship, teaching skills, and overall, changes in teacher behaviors and attitudes through the development of a bicultural growth mindset.

### *Mentorship Relationships*

The role of collaborative work is a significant benefit to how the programs at CIM are developed. Collaboration allows space for new perspectives and innovation. Teachers work in grade-level teams to create a shared vision for the academic curriculum unit plans and social-emotional wellness curating a holistic program design. The years of experience, personality differences, and teacher participation all play a role in the culture and nature of the academic and social programs. Many of the decisions were often facilitated among the teachers themselves. Since there was an absence of official teacher mentorship programs at CIM, the teachers found ways to support one another and develop the skills needed in the workplace. Professional development for teachers is essential in order to create a supportive context for teacher collaboration (Eisenschmidt, & Oder, 2018). The school leadership developed a program for teachers to attend their choice of professional development in 2017-2018, which is still in place today. Throughout the study, participants credited a number of pedagogical shifts due to this change as part of the teachers' reflections.

This study revealed a need for systematic approaches to mentorship relationships for new teachers and veteran teachers to grow in their field, in addition to professional development. According to Hargreaves and Fullan, (2000), "Good mentorship involves helping teachers work effectively with adults—being sure (as a professional community) of their own judgments while also being open and responsive to the opinions of others" (p. 53). Dominic stated a reflection of his own area for growth and vulnerability, even as

a veteran teacher is “knowing how to respond and seek out help when needed” is an example of self-awareness and the need for collective or peer mentorship. “Collaboration with colleagues has a positive impact on teachers’ morale” (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008 as cited in Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018) which reinforces trust and creates an open conversation between teachers about their work. As part of this important conversation about the role of a veteran or a novice, Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995) explain that “teaching is inherently complex and difficult, everyone needs help, not just the incompetent teacher or the novice” (as stated in Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 53). Thus, I am arguing that due to the collective and cultural ties among teachers that the collective nature to organize into their own self-sufficient professional learning communities was a matter of high need and action.

### *Mentoring and Communities of Practice*

The interactions at CIM, in terms of the relationships and bonds between teachers extend beyond the work of the classroom, it also included outside social interaction. Conversations about students, the programs, conflicts and solutions were held in social settings and many times, creative solutions were found. To broaden the scope of communities of practice within progressive dual language context, participants are challenged to create a shared reality within a classroom setting and among each other. Wenger (1998) discusses, the process of identity formation and to consider three distinct modes of belonging such as alignment, engagement and imagination. For instance, “Imagination is an important component of our experience of the world and our sense of place in it (p. 176). This study provides evidence that through imagination, and reimagination teachers are able to conceive new developments of pedagogy in their

professional settings and in other social environments. As a way of belonging, progressive dual language program teachers exhibited a continuation of a shared identity as the pioneers of an innovative language school. The teachers exhibited deep connections through the coordination of their actions and communal agreements. All of which required continuous problem solving and reassurance among fellow community members.

### ***Bicultural Growth Mindset***

As I have observed the arc of this study and researcher who is considered a pioneer teacher at CIM, I have observed and worked alongside this community to understand the complexities behind a language-based progressive education. The findings related to teaching skills drawn from the data specifically: flexibility, and project management. This research identifies specific literature and data to support their transformation over time. This evidence also suggests the ways in which the teachers collectively continually thrive and find solutions under the pressures to maintain high levels of educational outcomes. While the teachers have learned to build community, teachers reported their adaptability to sudden curricular changes and the constructivist nature of the program. As a result, the participants spoke to the bicultural growth mindset grounded in reflection and flexibility with themselves as educators and as lifelong learners like Walker and Tedick suggest (2000):

Immersion teachers vary in terms of a number of differences. Each teacher brings with them individual background knowledge, philosophies they bring to the immersion settings, their preparedness of immersion teaching, the choices they make for professional development and the demands of the curriculum

development and materials and resource choices they make about each individual learner (p. 23).

Through this framework, a number of participants extended their own personal understanding of progressive pedagogy and practice in a diverse community. For example, one participant, Yumei explained, “we can’t find other peoples’ models or previous papers to tell us what to do. By trying new things, we need to be reflective, we should adjust our next steps. So just be reflective, I think it is a really important element for everyone.” *Cultural humility* is defined as “a process that requires humility as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners” (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p.118). By enhancing care for our teaching skills into the design student approach tasks, teachers refine their skills of reflection ultimately improving their teaching practice. While simultaneously embracing the cultural differences of their students.

Related to the immersion teacher literature, a deep reflective component was prevalent among all participants, especially when addressing areas of need as a novice or veteran teacher. The teachers at CIM in terms of their areas of preparedness in an immersion setting were limited. In part of a bicultural growth mindset, flexibility, student voice and choice were important key skills named in the data.

Part of creating that progressive and immersion environment is deeply connected to the data from teachers who stated several times that learning alongside the students is engaging with the “process and not the end product” as an important finding. Menken and García, (2010) state, educators must negotiate sense-making instructional decisions, moment by moment. Arguing that educators should be made as educational policymakers



as their stories are critical pieces to the missing literature. García, Ibarra-Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) explain part of the translanguaging theory describes how essential it is for bilingual educators to adjust language practices and content to the child. To add, Garcia et al., (2017) state authentic bilingualism in education must emerge from the meaningful interaction of students with different linguistic backgrounds and their educators, instead of solely being handed down to educators as language policy. Which brings me to my final point regarding a bilingual growth mindset.

A shift in teaching philosophy essentially begins with the teacher as the lifelong learner developing instructional patterns that generate a bilingual growth mindset, which I interpret as cultivating open-minded thinking, and a bicultural responsibility as an instructor. Several teachers were explicit about their ability to stretch themselves as ongoing learners and to attend to individual learners. This is in line with the progressive theorist John Dewey (1938) stated, as cited in (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 390):

Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into...It is then the business of the educator to see in what direction and experience is heading ... Failure to take the moving force into account so as to judge and direct it on the ground of what it is moving into means disloyalty to the principle of experience itself. (p. 38)

This study examined how teachers developed competency in the areas needed to influence students and create a culture of flexible thinking. Teachers illustrated their flexibility through observations of their own behaviors and shifts in prioritizing the academic and social-emotional needs of students' through task-based performances. Teachers shared similar views about allowing the students to lead in their learning versus

being authoritative. Leading with a bicultural growth mindset, process versus an end product, and being flexible to support learning.

### *Surprises*

From the discussions in focus groups it is worth noting that our discussion regarding social justice and how it is taught in classes was brief. For instance, from a cultural understanding the ES teachers had more awareness and background teaching social justice concepts and content in their classes. However, many CHT were less familiar about the meaning of social justice and how to teach its concepts. In fact, teachers reported being unaware of a character in Mandarin to represent or translate to the words, social justice. The teachers were, however, aware of social emotional learning and closely connected personal responsibility and fostering a healthy classroom culture. In many ways, there were several teachers who were adamant about cultivating children's sense of obligation to a larger society through community service projects. However, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of social justice terms, themes, language were rarely discussed throughout the school.

As one of the surprising findings, throughout this research was the impact of sharing physical classroom spaces programs in bilingual spaces, which I have named as Peripheral Mentorship. All teachers involved in the study mentioned how being integrated together in the same classroom gave them access to the materials, and the ability to see the content taught in language classes. Hui, Dominic, and Yumei are experienced teachers with over five years of teaching experience. Their perspectives were generally positive in terms of how the physical spaces worked well for them by integrating language classes, and their teaching teams.

The participants with the most classroom experience found that the advantages of working in the same physical classroom outweighed the disadvantages. For example, the homeroom teachers found that the content shared in the classroom helped the classroom teachers to “communicate” or reinforce content and classroom behavior expectations, which would allow the homeroom teachers and English specialists to support and strengthen the lessons and support a cohesive teaching environment. Therefore, making it much easier for instructors to make connections and for students to do the same. As a consequence of a lack of classroom space for break-out English classrooms, it inevitably functioned to build stronger and more supportive community. Furthermore, bilingual programs might consider how physical spaces in bilingual schools support peer mentorship; therefore, positively affecting teacher capacity and student learning outcomes.

One comment that certainly held true for many of the teachers was a sense of belonging. The participants were familiar with bonding over travels to professional development conferences, returning to share newly learned material, day to day connections based on simple anecdotes about the progress of certain students, developing curriculum throughout the year, across grade levels within the school itself, and through daily interactions. A tantamount observation to note is the amount of time built into the schedule to plan and communicate with teaching partners.

One participant mentioned how the teachers were given more support this year, with at least 30 minutes guaranteed from the administration to work across from the English specialist and the homeroom teachers. “Yeah, 30 minutes that English teacher can be involved in the grade level, meeting planning, it’s very helpful so we can align

together, what we can [transfer], what we can teach, but I expect to see more.” [Hui, Focus Group, 4.2.2020]. According to Wenger (1998) “In it lies the potential for transformation of both the experience and competence and thus for learning, individually and collectively” (p. 139). As part of the *Community of Practice* theory, Hui’s comment exhibits a reciprocal interaction between experience and competence. Many of the educators in this study had limited years of experience in immersion schools as lead teachers and all of the ES’ previous experiences had no experience in dual language schools prior to CIM. Therefore, structured mentorship programs were significant areas of need.

While the results of this study describe a selection of teachers from CIM discussing different approaches central to their transformation as pedagogues. On a micro-level and a macro-level of social groupings, teachers articulated examples of cultural perceptions, bicultural awareness, and areas of challenge. Teachers demonstrated the ways in which the English Specialists and teachers of Chinese heritage experienced changes in their teaching practices and philosophies of teaching over time. This study allows insight into the experiences based on novice teachers and experienced teachers for improving the full range of teachers’ skills.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This research examined how teachers from both contextual backgrounds—Chinese language teachers and American English teachers—navigated their own teaching experiences in a dual language Mandarin immersion school. Their personal adaptations (transformation) to teach using an integrated model. It was evident through this investigation that all teachers' practices and philosophies changed over time. This study unveils insights into the teachers' experiences among one another and individual reflections. It found the direct needs of teachers in a progressive immersion environment through the analysis of community and cultural dynamics.

The English specialists and Chinese language teachers responsible for applying the goals of both language immersion and progressive education included teachers from diverse backgrounds and years of experience. They encountered challenges creating a balanced curriculum, changes in leadership, and adjusting to a deeply collaborative teaching model. From those experiences, the findings from this study are significant in supporting teachers, policymakers, and administrators involved in the inner workings of task-based foreign language programs. This investigation was designed to emphasize the significance of teachers' voices that are responsible for developing the formula for an unfamiliar teaching model, progressive immersion education.

To capture their experience holistically, the analysis of their experiences included lessons learned, the best practices, and the skills involved. The framework aims to analyze the cultural experiences, development, and cultural transformation of a group of educators from diverse backgrounds. Through the lens of teachers' voices, this reflective

framework identified how teachers have transformed as progressive pedagogues collectively. A theoretical framework grounded in cultural humility, and the community of practice provided a lens through which to internalize the teaching practices and culture of progressive education.

### **Summary of the Study**

Since the beginning of its time, CIM started in 2007 with a single preschool class. The vision, a startup school immersed in Mandarin, and a *Reggio Emilia*, a student-centered, constructivist instructional approach. In other words, teachers instructed primarily in Mandarin framed by a progressive inquiry-based and student-led curriculum. The teachers and students created meaningful projects loosely guided by thematic units throughout the year integrating a rigorous and engaging curriculum.

CIM's journey into the unknown world of Mandarin and progressive education has changed over time and now the mission statement is as follows; "Our mission is to nurture the young heart and mind in a joyful learning environment, where the convergence of progressive education and Mandarin immersion ignites curiosity, connectedness, and engagement in the world (CIM, 2018, mission section. Para. 5). Inquiry-based meaning utilizing a constructivist model to guide instruction and meaning for students. The ultimate goal of progressive education is an increased degree of student autonomy, including task-based skills, project-based learning, and cooperative grouping activities to promote collaboration and teamwork. Therefore, this study investigated the collective and personal experiences of teachers navigating the complexities of progressive immersion education at the elementary school level.

By understanding and weaving themes from participants from diverse backgrounds both international teachers and native English speaking teachers in their own experimental design spoke to their own best practices, and new systems of learning. Lyon (2018) states, more reports have called for increased efforts to build Chinese language programs, prepare teachers, and create digital resources to serve them. Therefore, gaining multiple perspectives from international contexts serve the greater scope of pedagogy. This study examined the adjustment of teaching in the American school system and how a diverse group of teachers work together to create a strong sense of community.

Finally, the need for expertise in this area bilingual education is growing significantly and the consequences have not been thoroughly studied. According to Dunn (2013) as foreign language dual-language schools grow exponentially in the United States there is an acute shortage of qualified, certified teachers. As a result, many teachers are recruited from international countries and placed in unfamiliar school settings, and the consequences can be problematic. This research further informs colleagues, administrators, and community members about the needs of teachers within nuanced teaching environments.

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the voices of teachers specifically, Chinese Homeroom teachers and the English Specialist instructors to explore the lessons learned from examining their experiences. The intent of this study was to also share the approaches, strategies, and principles considered essential to expanding foreign language schools and progressive practices.

This study demonstrated a strong sense of community among teachers in a dual language and progressive environment. The participants of this study shared commonalities between their own educational experiences to explain their connections to one another. The findings of this study describe the ways in which teachers changed their initial teaching practices over time to build a more comprehensive and wholistic program. Through their narratives, the teachers exhibited a deep resiliency while advocating for additional support, training, and resources. This chapter includes how the ways of knowing and experience can inform school culture to be challenged and changed to strengthen a community. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations to enrich meaningful teaching practices, necessary considerations, and the relationship between social emotional health and teacher empowerment.

#### **Immigration Policies: Residential Assistance and Community Impact**

Immigration policies and housing was a broader theme that arose in the study. The Bay Area is an exceptionally expensive area for teachers specifically for teachers who are currently looking for employment in the US abroad. Due to the limited number of highly qualified teachers in the US with certified degrees in dual language teaching, multilingual schools search statewide and globally. The international teachers employed must apply for H-1B Work Visas to work in the US, which was reported by the teachers of this study reported to be stressful, an expensive and daunting legal process.

The process to approve legal status in addition to housing for many teachers has caused relentless worry and to the school itself. In the past, CIM provided housing for many of their international teachers. The data suggests, teachers found a sense of home and belonging under these conditions. It was imperative to their own social emotional



health as they grew to become familiar in a new cultural setting. As a suggestion, providing residential assistance is imperative for international hires in schools across the US. Creative solutions such as communal living situations or providing teacher housing during the workweek, suggests long term commitments to education and the schools' sense of humanizing educational action.

Recently, with travel bans in place, multiple cases of teachers were legally removed from the classroom setting. Preventing qualified teachers from their work to maintain consistency and stability for students and the community at large. The uptick in unpredictable immigration policies from 2017-2019 were not only disruptive and unexpected, but harmful for the teachers' social emotional health and the community as a whole. Due to the harmful immigration policies that impacted so many teachers, it is imperative for dual language schools consider action plans in the future. Action plans must be provided to discuss with the community when situations arise.

### **Future of Progressive and Dual Language Education**

Due to the political climate of the United States and focus of race relations caused by the current COVID-19 Pandemic, and prevalent evidence of systemic racism, I believe the focus of anti-racist education and social justice education is imperative. CIM, like many independent schools must begin to look at the structure of its own policies of inclusivity, anti-racist curriculum, and data-based systems to hold the teachers and leaders of the school accountable to reflect the mission of the institution. Teachers, parents, school board members, and other community members must reimagine engaging in a transformative experience of participation to otherwise revise the mission statement. There are direct consequences to a community when the curriculum does not accurately

reflect its population, current events, and relevant content. Therefore, curriculum design must include common language to address social issues that reflect current events. As part of the school's values and ethics, cutting edge education includes anti-racist education, and progressive social awareness to address a globally conscious community.

As educators, parents, school leaders, all schools serve a role to address diversity issues within their own institutions. There is a critical responsibility between the statements and the schools' strong language about inclusivity, developing bicultural global citizens and the actions taken. CIM's progressive dual language international teachers, reported there was an awareness and responsibility to teach social emotional intelligence, but were unfamiliar with social justice terms. From the teachers' point of view, it was not part of their background to teach US social justice themes, and therein the responsibility of the English specialists. This elicited patterns of confusion among teachers, which made content segregated and posed discrepancies in expectations resulted.

From the teachers' point of view, it was their responsibility to impart knowledge and choreograph language content, social emotional learning, and other academic content which left no time for social justice. At the same time teachers were not held accountable for teaching social justice themes in Mandarin. At the request of some of the CHT, more trainings, professional development opportunities and conversations were reinforced to help inform broaden the commitment to the school's values.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Accountability Systems***

Over the years and beyond, CIM continues to go through its own transformational adjustments. These include enormous physical construction, leadership shifts, and community changes. The research suggests further attention to the needs of language teachers on campus and their perceptions of the program and teamwork. To further empower teachers, I suggest a starting with fostering a culture of risk taking among teachers to provide a culture of productive feedback and accountability. Teachers need opportunities to practice freedom to praise one another and to also provide clear, and compassionate feedback through intentional systems.

First, the team-teaching model requires a strong professional relationship to function effectively. I recommend team teaching accountability systems to hold one another to classroom teaching standards and communication expectations. Teachers hold one another accountable by sharing their goals for teaching, lesson planning and areas of growth with their teaching partners and are supported by each other. Teachers should be able to create their own checklists or an evaluative tool to attain specific goals. Team teaching evaluations and observation notes would provide data for teams on a consistent basis. The expectation is that teaching teams would be able to maintain open dialogue and provide feedback from a consist source.

Moreover, as a recommendation, I suggest the leadership create staff surveys on a regular basis to target teacher satisfaction. As Wenger (1998) states, “in order to combine engagement, imagination, and alignment, learning communities cannot be isolated” (pg. 275). Throughout my time as an educator, reporting feedback to colleagues or leadership

teams has persistently felt intimidating. With the exception of colleagues or team leaders whom I gained trustworthy relationships, provided both, a safe and brave environment. Whether it was intentional or otherwise, teachers have shared their feelings of being unheard. This research was intended to echo the thoughts, philosophies and reflections of teachers over time. What I found was that the teachers who volunteered to share their reflections in an open dialogue, were eager to share their experiences because they felt they had not been given opportunities to be candid in the past.

Additionally, teachers were honest about their feelings of being powerless when it came to sharing feedback with school leadership because of the unknown consequences or backlash. For many of the teachers, specifically, the teachers of Chinese heritage, reported keeping their questions or comments to themselves due to the feelings of the inability to change a system or of repeated dismissal of their requests from previous school leaders. From my time at CIM, the number of surveys and analysis from those surveys were sparingly shared. For many teachers, including myself, the inactions to accurately report how results from a survey were often omitted.

As a consequence, the collective insights, and opinions about leadership, were unintentionally muted or silenced. Teachers are held to a standard to not only deliver engaging student-centered lessons, but also innovate strategies from their reflections and observations for each individual student. Teachers are accountable for the learning of each student and so the programs related to leadership and pedagogy should be held to the same standard. The recommendation is to create that same standard for leadership; to observe and reflect and provide the feedback necessary related to the current topics related to teacher support.

### *Mentorship and Promotion of Cultural Humility*

Although educators and reformers are eager to create the next innovative school program, I would encourage formal mentoring and professional development for teachers who are encouraged to be mentors. As school leadership prepares to adequately support new teachers, studies argue that mentorship is actually more complex in a changing educational field. For example, Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) argue because of the increasingly complex educational demands for new and veteran teachers mentoring should be “less hierarchical, less individualistic, more wide-ranging and more inclusive” (as cited in Sunde & Ulvik, 2015, p. 755). Moving forward, it is recommended to identify the needs of mentors who often enter this position without enough training to sufficiently understand their roles specifically when it comes to understanding their needs and identifying their roles.

Depending on the nature and culture of the school, the mentor roles and standards should align with the framework of the institution and the goals of the school’s programming. As a consideration, there have been studies to support mentorship in residency programs working successfully. As a consideration for preservice teachers and veteran teachers a study by Garza, Reynosa, Werner, Duchaine, and Harter, (2019) described how teachers in a residency program demonstrated how mentoring within this context fostered mutual benefits and readiness in the teaching profession. As an extension to resolving residency and mentoring, CIM and other schools with international teachers may want to consider a sustainable framework that addresses long term mentoring solutions.

Another recommendation for the school's engaging in dual language and progressive programs, would be to address cultural understanding through building awareness through the framework of *cultural humility*. It was evident that many of the educators were familiar with self- reflection of their teaching practice and would benefit from a more robust cultural framework to address building cultural awareness. Cultural competency is not enough especially when society and educators are collectively being asked to address the complicated history of US race relations. Cultural humility is framed on the basis that one's own understanding as the learner, rather than the expert engages a curiosity relating to power dynamics including, privilege and power. Educators must reconceptualize how their own reflections and behaviors as progressive teachers influence all different social circles within their own institutions.

With over a decade of educational experiences in both public and private independent settings, there are unspoken cultural norms. Teachers as colleagues are responsible for knowing and understanding these social norms within each unique environment. One of the lessons I have come to understand while working at CIM, is how essential it is to have an understanding of cultural humility. Like so many educational practitioners who practice daily reflections of lessons, the goals of cultural humility should also be practiced within educational contexts. The goals include; "the need for openness, self-awareness, critical reflection, supportiveness, or acknowledgement of individual difference" (Tschaepé, p. 154, 2018). Institutions claiming globally conscious awareness should practice not simply cultural competence, but cultural humility and cultural curiosity. Educational leaders, and teachers especially

in immersion settings should be introduced to the concept of cultural humility as an essential practice.

The promotion of a culturally diverse campus is a strength for schools in the United States, particularly independent schools, but how are teachers promoting cultural understanding through cultural humility? Immersion schools like CIM, with so much of the teaching staff population from various areas of the world, should encourage authentic school wide community building opportunities. Instilling schoolwide traditions and community practices in an authentic setting allows an opportunity for new connections, friendships and cultural understanding. Affinity groups were suggested by several participants of the study and were on agreeance that it would allow space to set goals and discuss challenging topics. It is especially important for novice teachers to find a sense of belonging and school culture. Community strengthens with consistency and safety; hence it is critical to promote bicultural understanding of cultures of a school. One cannot ignore the fact that each person bringing in their own experiences, opinions, and teaching theory, impact the nature of a classroom.

### **Implications and Delimitations**

My role as a trusted colleague and veteran teacher at CIM allowed me to gain further insight into the complexities of the authentic experiences of immersion educators. My relationships with the participants were significant due to the personal interest of my work and their dedication to scholarship as teachers. As a tool to mediate bias, I analyzed teacher files and newsletters. However, one participant was unable to locate or access her previous files including a statement of philosophy, or her previous resume. In addition, this study is restricted by the time in which I conducted the study. It is a snapshot

occurring during that time and there may be new considerations after the Covid-19 crisis. The study was conducted over a period of four months, at the school site, which at the time was under tremendous spatial constraints due to construction, which may have altered the results of this data.

The delimitations of this study were bound by the environment of this research site. The site and setting is a private dual immersion (Mandarin/English) school in the bay area, the findings may have stronger implications for this population. Further studies are needed to examine parallels with public bilingual schools or those in Spanish/English settings. The method of using focus groups, interviews, and document analysis provide insights into participants' perspectives but does not use observations to compare behaviors in classroom practices. That is beyond the scope of this study.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The reason why I chose to investigate teachers is based on my interest in best teaching practices and also elevating the level of cohesion among all of my colleagues. We followed our instincts because it is the first of its kind there isn't a manual to follow to build a program like CIM's. Through my research, and personal experience, I have found that teachers' voices are largely left out of studies in educational policy and based on that, I began to dig much deeper into the need for this study.

In each stage of the research process, it was satisfying to work alongside educators who were eager to put themselves at the center of educational research. Their encouragement through the process demonstrated a strong interest in scholarship and the opportunity to present their testimonies. Through this journey, I was surprised to discover the varying ways in which mentoring and physical shared pace impacted and promoted



deeper cohesion. I think the constraints exposed by a community gave access to different community members, which developed into a new range of mentoring. Furthering the potential and importance of expanding intentional leadership models to validate teachers' confidence, attitudes, behaviors and teaching practices.

The teaching process ultimately includes a constant culture of transformation, and bandwidth for the resiliency of teachers was abundantly clear within this context. Throughout this entire process, I began to see my colleagues through a completely different lens; or a lens guided by transformative thinking versus the constant struggle and criticism. I realized the importance of naming those challenges, but also found the cohesive relationships that blossomed from that struggle. For me, this research was incredibly rewarding.

At CIM, there is a culture of deep respect which was reflected by my colleagues dedicated to their practice; committed to their professional disciplines. I developed tremendous insight into the pedagogical process while forming relationships through shared experiences and intellectual discourse. My research contributes to a broader scope of teacher agency, a fundamental and necessary component for enriching schoolwide environments. This study examines new ways of thinking and approaches to progressive dual language programs among colleagues. I appreciated different perspectives across a diverse group of teachers to address some of the tensions and successes of a teaching community.

Finally, these findings demonstrate we have a responsibility to capitalize on the tremendous diverse strengths of every teacher on campus to work collectively. My focus on cultivating agency for leadership and humanizing practices in the workplace will

continue as researchers move forward with the insights of teachers' voices in the next coming years. Through their stories, I have been able to illustrate the power of the learning process and education to emphasize an individual's capability to influence and enrich their own environment.

## REFERENCES

- Aldana, U.S., & Martinez, D.C. (2018). The Developments of a Community of Practice for Educators Working with Newcomer, Spanish-speaking Students. *Theory into Practice*, 2, 137.
- Arao, B. & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. *The Art of Effective Facilitation*. 135-150.
- Asia Society. (2008). Chinese in 2008; An expanding field. retrieved from <http://asiasociety.org/files/Chinesein2008.pdf>.
- Baker, C., & Hornberger, N.H., (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th eds.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C., & Wright, W.E. (2017). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (6<sup>th</sup> eds.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Berg, B.L. (2004). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. California State University, Long Beach. *Pearson*. pp. 124-145.
- Bialystok, E. (2003). *Bilingualism in development: Language literacy and cognition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press (Virtual Publishing).
- Blazar, D. & Kraft, M., (2017). Teacher and Teaching Effects on Students' Attitudes and Behaviors. *Edu Eval Policy Anal.*, 39(1), 146-170.
- Boggs, G.L. (2012). *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*. University of California Press.
- Cammarata, L., Tedick, D., (2012). Balancing content and language in instruction: The experience of immersion teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96. (2), 251-269.

- Castellanos, D., (1983). *The Best of two worlds: Bilingual-bicultural education in the US*. (U.S. Department of Education National Institute of Educational Resources Information Center). Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education.
- Chen, YL., Yang, TA. & Chen, H.L. (2017). Challenges encountered in a Chinese immersion program in the United States. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 26 (3-4), 163-170.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Daus-Magbual, A., & Tintiangco-Cubales, A. (2015). *The power of ethnic studies: developingculturally and community responsive leaders*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J., Boydston, J. A., & Dewey, J. (1980). *The school and society*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1938/2015). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta Pi.
- Dolson, D. P. (1985). *The Application of Immersion Education in the United States*. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. Rosslyn, VA.
- Duff, P. & Li, D. (2004). Issues in Mandarin language instruction: Theory, research and practice. *System*, 32, 443-456.

- Eisenschmidt E., Oder T. (2018). Does Mentoring Matter? On the Way to Collaborative School Culture. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 7(1), 7-23.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (Eds.). (2005). *Teachers' voices: storytelling and possibilities*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Epstein, J., & Sanders, M. (2006). Prospects for change: preparing educators for school, family, and community partnerships. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 81(2), 81-120. Retrieved from <http://0www.jstor.org.ignacio.usfca.edu/stable/25594712>.
- Everson, M. E. (2009). Literacy development in Chinese as a foreign language. In M.E. Everson & Y. Xiao (Eds.), *Teaching Chinese as a foreign language: Theories and applications* Boston, MA: Cheng & Tsui.
- Farley, L.A., Brooks, K., & Pope, K. (2017). Engaging students in praxis using photovoice research. *Multicultural Education*. 24(2), 49–52. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=eric&AN=EJ1150940&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s3818721>
- Freire, P. (1970/2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.)*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1974). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Fortune, T., Tedick, D., & Walker, C. (2008). Integrated language and content teaching: Insights from the language immersion classroom. In Fortune, W., and Tedick, D (Ed.), *Pathways to Multilingualism: evolving perspectives on immersion education* (pp. 71-96). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=215745&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s3818721>

- Gandara, P., Moran, R., & Garcia E. (2004). Legacy of “Brown”: “Lau” and language policy in the United States. *American Educational Research Association*. Vol. 28, 27-46.
- Garcia, O. (2009) *Bilingual Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Global Perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley/Blackwell.
- García, O., Sylvan, C.E. (2011). Pedagogies and Practices in Multilingual Classrooms: Singularities in Pluralities. *Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 385-400.  
<http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01208.x>.
- García, O., Zakharia, Z., & Otcu, B. (2013). *Bilingual community education and multilingualism: Beyond heritage languages in a global city*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- García, O., Ibarra-Johnson, S., Seltzer, K. (2017). *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging students bilingualism for learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Inc. Publishing.
- Garte, R. ( 2017). American progressive education and the schooling of poor children: A brief history of a philosophy and practice. *International journal of progressive education*. 13 (2), 7-17.
- Garza, R., Reynosa, R., Werner, P., Duchaine, E., & Harter, R.A. (2019). Developing a Mentoring Framework Through the Examination of Mentoring Paradigms in a Teacher Residency Program. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3). Retrieved from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol44/iss3/1>
- Gonzalez-Carriedo, R., Bustos, N., & Ordonez, J. (2016). Constructivist approaches in a dual language classroom. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19 (2), 108-111.

- Guest, G., Namey, E. E., & Mitchell, M. L. (2013). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Haneda, M. (2006). Classrooms as Communities of Practice: A Reevaluation.
- Hanson, E.C. (2013). *Cultural adjustment of teachers from china*. (Masters thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (Order No. 1545376).
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2000). Mentoring in the New Millennium. *Theory Into Practice*, 39 (1), 50.
- Hayes, W. (2008). The future of progressive education. *Educational Horizons*. 86, (3), 153-160. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42923723>.
- Jiménez, R. M. (2020). Community cultural wealth pedagogies: Cultivating autoethnographic counternarratives and migration capital. *American Educational Research Journal (AERJ)*, 57(2), 775-807. DOI: 10.3102/0002831219866148
- Keenan, B. (1977). *The Dewey experiment in China: Educational reform and political power in the early republic*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 81. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kong, K. (2015). Teachers' identities and creative teaching in language immersion classrooms. *Learning Languages*. 21 (1), 20-23.
- Kohn, A. (2008). Progressive education: why it's hard to beat, but also hard to find. Retrieved from <https://www.alfiekhon.org>
- Kumagai, A. & Lyson M. (2009). Beyond cultural competence: critical consciousness, social justice and multicultural education. *Academic Medicine*, 84, (6). 872-787.

- Lave, J. (1991). Situated learning; Legitimate peripheral participation. In Resnick, L., Levin, B., John., M., Teasley, S. D. (eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition*. American Psychological Association
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning; Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, G., & Wen, K., (2015). East Asian heritage language education for plurilingual reality in the United States: Practices, potholes and possibilities. *International Multilingual Research Journal*. 9. 274-290.
- Little, T. & Ellison, K. (2015). *Loving Learning: How progressive education can save America's schools*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Liu, X. (2012) *Becoming laoshi in US high schools: Case studies of three foreign-born Chinese language teacher candidates* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (3553533).
- Lyon, S. (2018). Recruiting and supporting international Chinese language teachers in U.S. K-12 programs. In S.C. Wang & J.K. Peyton (Eds.), *CELIN Briefs Series*. New York, NY: Asia Society.
- Lyster, R. (2007). *Learning and teaching languages through content: A Counterbalanced approach*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins North America.
- McGinnis, S. (1994). Cultures of instruction: Identifying and resolving conflicts. *Theory into Practice*, 33 (1), 16-22.
- Menken, K., & García, O. (2010). *Negotiating language policies in schools: educators as policymakers*. Routledge.



- Omatsu, G. (2006). Making student leadership development an integral part of our classrooms. In W. -C. Chen & G. Omatsu (Eds.), *Teaching about Asian Pacific Americans: Effective activities, strategies, and assignments for classrooms and communities* (pp. 183-194). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pogodzinski, B., Youngs, P., & Frank, K.A. (2013). Collegial climate and novice teachers' intent to maintain teaching. *American Journal of Education*, 120, 27-54.
- ReggioChildren (2010). The infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia: *Historical notes and general information*. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Municipal infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools of Reggio Emilia.
- Romig, N. (2009). *Acculturation of four Chinese teachers teaching in the United States: An ethnographic study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (3395378).
- San Miguel, G. (1984). Conflict and controversy in the evolution of bilingual education in the united states-an interpretation. *Social Science Quarterly*, 65 (2), 505-518.
- Shin, S. J. (2018). *Bilingualism in schools and society: Language, identity and policy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sunde, E., & Ulvik, M. (2015). *School leaders views on mentoring and newly qualified teachers' needs*. <http://doi.org/10.3402/edu.v5.23923>
- Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (1981). *Bilingual education in Ontario: A decade of research*. Ontario, Canada: Ministry of Education.

- Tedick (ed.), D.J., Tedick, D.J. & Fortune, T.W. (Ed). (2008). *Pathways to Multilingualism: Evolving perspectives on immersion education*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, Ltd.
- Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9(2), 117-125.
- Tschaeppe, M. (2018). Cultural humility and Dewey's pattern of inquiry: developing good attitudes and overcoming bad habits. *Contemporary Pragmatism*, (15), 152-164.
- Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. (2005). Theorizing language teachers identity: three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. 4 (1), 21-44.
- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practices and students learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 80-91.  
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.01.004>
- Walker, C. & Tedick D.J. (2000). The Complexity of immersion education: Teachers address the issues. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84 (1), 5-27.
- Wenger-Trayner, Beverly & Etienne. (2015). Communities of practice a brief introduction: A brief overview of the concept and its uses. Retrieved from <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>
- Wenger, E. V. (1998). *Communities of practice learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

- Wang, C., & M. A. Burris. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behaviour*, 24 (3): 369-387.
- Wang, W. & Kuo, N. C. (2016). Chinese language teachers' instructional contexts, knowledge and challenges in teaching students with special needs. *Chinese as a Second Language. The Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA*, 51, 138-163.
- Weise, E. (2014). *A Parent's Guide to Mandarin Immersion*. San Francisco; Chenery Street Press.
- Wiley, T., Garcia, D.R., Danzig, A., & Stigler, M.L. (2014). Introduction: language policy, politics, and diversity in education. *Review of Research in Education*. (38). vii-xxiii.
- Wu, H.P., Palmer, D., & Field, S. (2011). Understanding teachers' professional identity and beliefs in the Chinese heritage language school in the USA. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*. 24, (1), 47-60.
- Yue, Y. (2017). Teaching Chinese in K-12 Schools in the United States: What are the challenges? *Foreign Language Annals*, 50, 601-620.
- Zhao, Y., Meyers, L., & Meyers, B. (2009). Cross-cultural immersion in China: preparing pre-service elementary teachers to work with diverse student populations in the United States. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 37, 3, 295-317.

- Zhou, W. & Li, G. (2015). Chinese language teachers' expectations and perceptions of American students' behavior: Exploring the nexus of cultural differences and classroom management. *System*, 49, 17-27.
- Zia, H. (2001). Surrogate slaves to American dreamers. In *Asian American dreams: The emergence of an American people* (pp. 21-52) New York; Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.