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# Chapter 10

## Instructional Framework for Integrating Cross–Cultural Content Using Culturally Responsive and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogies

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter describes an instructional framework for culturally relevant and affirming teaching and curricula that addresses effective ways to interconnect cross-cultural content to expand cultural and content literacy in K-12. The Culturally and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogies for Local Context (CLAP-LC) Framework was developed to create culturally and linguistically affirming content, promote equitable education, and nurture student engagement. The framework centers on the intersection of cultural knowledge and lived experiences of students, families, and communities in content and curriculum to promote student achievement, especially students from minoritized and marginalized groups.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes an instructional framework for culturally relevant and affirming teaching and curricula that addresses effective ways to interconnect cross-cultural content to expand cultural and content literacy in P-16. This cross-cultural content is based on the historical, cultural, and geographical context of the students and communities of the lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in deep South Texas. The framework for teaching content using Culturally and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogies for Lo-

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cal Context (CLAP-LC) focuses on providing P-16 teachers and university professors with professional development opportunities to learn content that reflects the history, culture, and geography of the region to enhance the existing curriculum to develop content literacy. This Framework was developed to create culturally and linguistically affirming content, promote equitable education, and nurture student engagement. Although the framework emerged from a curriculum and pedagogical program designed for educators that teach in schools with predominate Mexican origin student population, it can be applied in diverse and distinct cultural and linguistic contexts. The Framework centers on the intersection of cultural knowledge and lived experiences of students, families and communities and curriculum to promote student achievement, especially students from minoritized and marginalized groups.

The U.S. experienced a significant demographic shift with the growth in the Hispanic/Latino population during the first decades of the twenty-first century. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), national census figures showed that the Hispanic/Latino population stood at 60.6 million, comprising 18% of the nation's total population with 63% of the overall Hispanic/Latino population being of Mexican origin. Much of this population resides in the Southwest, Illinois, New York, and Florida. Texas alone is home to 11.5 million Hispanics/Latinos, comprising approximately 40% of the state's total.<sup>1</sup> The increase in this demographic also contributed to the growth of the Latina/o student population in public schools. Between 1996 to 2016, the number of Latina/o students enrolled in PreKinder-12 schools, colleges and universities in the United States doubled from 8.8 million to 17.9 million (Bauman, 2017). Thus, in 2016 Latina/o students made up an average of 22.7% of all students enrolled in P-16 schools nationwide (See Figure 1). In some areas of the country, such as the lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in deep South Texas, this percentage is higher and growing. With the sharp increase of Latina/o students in PK-12<sup>th</sup> grade schools, it is critical that the curriculum and teaching methods reflect the growth of this student population to meet their needs and provide an equitable education (see Figure 1).

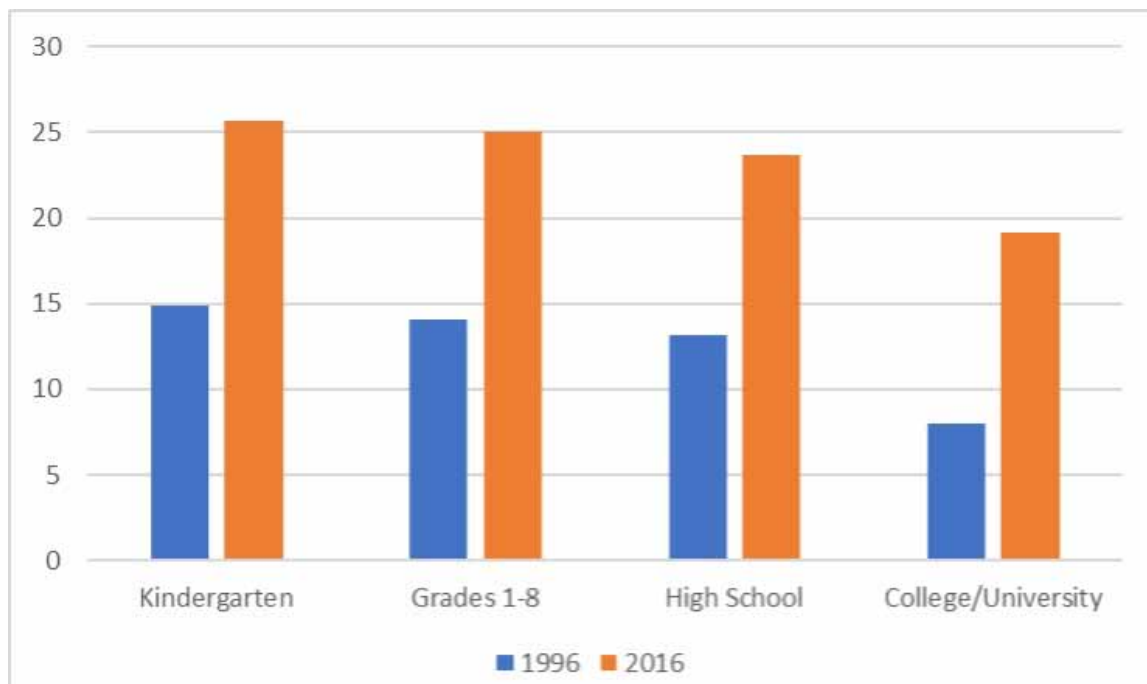
Located along the Texas-Mexico border, the lower RGV is comprised of four counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties with Hidalgo and Cameron Counties being the largest, and has a total population of 1.36 million. The adjacent Mexican border cities of Reynosa, Matamoros, Camargo, Rio Bravo, and Valle Hermoso have a population of 1,444,091. According to census figures for 2019, the region's demographic is predominantly Mexican origin, constituting 91.5% of the RGV's total population.<sup>2</sup> The two largest MSAs (Metropolitan Statistical Areas), McAllen-Edinburg- Mission and Brownsville-Harlingen, are surrounded by towns, small cities, and rural colonias. Between 2010 and 2019, the Hispanic/Latina/o population in the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission MSA grew by 13.7%, reaching 804,000.<sup>3</sup> The RGV is also a transnational borderland (Anzaldúa, 1987) that has been largely shaped by its historical, social, cultural, economic, and political development on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. (Alonzo, 1998; Hernández, 2014; Montejano, 1987; Pagan, 2004; Valerio-Jiménez, 2013). The social cultural, linguistic and economic milieu remains heavily influenced by the steady immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries over the last 40 years.

## **CONTEXT FOR THE FRAMEWORK: HISTORIAS AMERICANAS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The Framework described in this chapter emanated from work accomplished for a three-year grant awarded to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). UTRGV serves a student population that reflects the region's demographic population with a 91% Latina/o student population. In September

*Figure 1. Graph on the number of Latina/o/x students enrolled in public schools*

*Source: US Census, Current Population Survey, Student Supplement Survey Files, 1996-2016*



2018, UTRGV’s B3 Institute received an American History and Civics Education Grant from the U.S. Department of Education for \$2.1 million to implement *Historias Americanas: Engaging History and Citizenship in the Rio Grande Valley* a professional development program for K-12 Social Studies and History teachers from the largest school districts in the region, Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District (ECISD) and Brownsville Independent School District (BISD). The grant was awarded for three years from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2021. The B3 Institute is charged with leading the university’s mission to promote bilingualism, biculturalism and biliteracy in its services, curricula, and programs to intentionally serve Latina/o students as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The Co-PIs and authors of the grant, an associate professor of Mexican American Studies and a Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of the B3 Institute, designed a program to give teachers opportunities to learn the history, culture, civics and geography of the RGV from a Mexican American perspective and innovative teaching strategies to provide their students with historically and culturally relevant content and curriculum.

One goal of the program was to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of the existing social studies and history curriculum with content that reflected the ancestral history of the predominant Mexican descent student population by building teachers’ knowledge of Mexican American history, which is largely missing from the standard curriculum. Another goal was to build teacher capacity in terms of pedagogical skills, practices, and strategies to incorporate new knowledge into existing lessons. Another goal was to provide students with a culturally relevant education through content that accurately reflected the history, culture, and contributions of Mexican origin people in American history to promote student engagement, historical thinking, and academic achievement (Busey & Russell, 2016; Cabrera et al.,

2014; Noboa, 2013). Scholars have argued the importance of not only incorporating content reflecting the histories and experiences of ethnic, racial, and linguistically diverse groups, which is typically left out of or marginalized in social studies and history curriculum, but also students' funds of knowledge, skills, values, traditions and community's cultural wealth in K-12 content to provide students with an equitable education—one that reflects their lived experiences and historical realities (Cabrera et al., 2014; Gay, 2002, 2010; González & Moll, 2002, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Macias, 1974; Moll et al., 1992; Noboa, 2005, 2013; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005).

Historias Americanas was guided by two well-known frameworks: place-based education (PBE) and culturally relevant education (CRE). Educators and scholars have long advocated for the use of place-based education to promote student engagement and improve teaching and learning in the environmental and physical sciences, math, technology, and social studies. Sobel (2004) defines place-based education as “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens” (p. 6). While this definition is broad, PBE may focus on specific elements such as the specificity of a region and sites within a local community. Integrating place-based approaches within a curriculum combined with experiential and investigative learning helps students make micro-macro connections between local histories and larger narratives (Gruenewald, 2003). PBE also positions the lives of students and histories of their communities at the center of curricular lessons and connects the instructional and learning process of the classroom to the community in which students live (Smith, 2007; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sobel, 2005).

In *Historias Americanas* PBE was used to teach participants the local history of the region by taking them to specific sites that were culturally and historically relevant to the development of the RGV from the perspective of Indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican peoples who contributed to the making of the region. The aim was to build teachers' knowledge of their communities' history and its relevance to their lives by helping them see themselves and their family histories in the local history of the region. After day-long excursions to various sites, teachers were encouraged to engage in a micro-macro analysis of concepts they teach such as migration, use of natural resources, community building, cultural practices, economic activity, imperialism, industrialization, resistance (to what?), politics, and civic engagement and then connect their new learning to their local context to larger contexts. During lesson-planning sessions teachers were asked to reflect on how they connected to the place-based sites and think about how they could integrate them into their teaching using place-based lessons, activities, or investigative projects. Using a micro-macro analysis ensures that teachers developed lessons that enables students to actively engage the new content and link it to their lived experiences and the broader context of U.S. and world history.

Like place-based education, educational scholars have long advocated for integrating the home culture, language, identity, knowledge and skills of ethnic, racial, and linguistically and culturally distinct students in PK-12 content to make schooling more relevant for them and improve their educational trajectories (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Johnston et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Macias, 1974; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). Over the last thirty-five years educational researchers have theorized ways to capitalize on and validate minoritized students' funds of knowledge to bridge home and school experiences as a way to provide culturally relevant, appropriate, congruent, responsive and/or compatible instruction to increase student engagement and academic achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Gay,

2002, 2010; González et al., 2005; Johnston et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2018; Moll et al., 1992; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). The concept of culturally relevant education has gained the most traction as a broad framework that advocates a paradigm shift in teachers' mindset, pedagogies, and teaching practices to provide diverse student populations with an inclusive education that reflects and validates their sociohistorical realities, lived experiences and ethnic and cultural identities. Within this larger framework, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching offers guidelines to give preservice and in-service teachers opportunities to develop new content, instructional methods and curriculum for all students that challenge standardized curricula and the assimilative goals of education rooted in deficit thinking (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Gay, 2002, 2010; Johnston et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). Both concepts call on teachers to learn who their students are, including their family histories and the communities they live in. Then they are asked to integrate students' funds of knowledge, family values, cultural traditions, and everyday life experiences into K-12 content and teaching. This is especially relevant for teaching social studies and history content.

Currently schools still teach a traditional, standard social studies and history curriculum and use textbooks that reflect a predominantly Eurocentric perspective that highlights the experiences, accomplishments and contributions of white Euroamerican, middle-class and elite, men and women (Noboa, 2005, 2013; Salinas et al., 2015; Salvucci, 1991). Thus, students from non-white ethnic, racial and class backgrounds can feel alienated and disconnected from the content (Busey & Russell, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999). When students from non-white ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds do not see themselves in the curriculum or see negative images that devalue, essentialize or perpetuate negative stereotypes of their cultural group, it can "be disorienting or cause a moment of psychic disequilibrium" (Takaki, 2008, pp. 29-30). Takaki describes the effect on students when they do not see themselves in the larger historical narrative as akin to looking into a mirror and not seeing oneself (Takaki, 2008). The omission or marginalization of the experiences and contributions of minoritized groups to the making of the nation, makes it difficult for these students to connect their lives to the dominant, majoritarian narratives, stay motivated to learn, perform well on tests or exams, or remain engaged in school (Bussey & Russell, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Sleeter 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). However, when students see themselves in school content and curriculum and are encouraged to critically analyze their lived experiences and connect those experiences to the larger narrative, students' learning, motivation, relationships with teachers, empathy for others and academic success improve (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Busey & Russell, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). More recent studies show that helping students make micro-macro connections with content that accurately reflects their histories, lived experiences, knowledge, skills, and voices, using culturally affirming teaching practices is a proven method of increasing student interest, motivation, engagement and academic achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018).

Scholars have argued that including historically, culturally, and linguistically relevant content into daily lessons that reflects the backgrounds and histories of students, families and local communities using culturally responsive and linguistically affirming pedagogies promotes a positive identity and self-image among students, improved teacher-student relations, and increased student engagement and academic performance (Busey & Russell, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Salinas et al., 2015; Sleeter 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Moreover, including a historically accurate, inclusive and diverse narratives that reflects the

experiences of all who contributed to the making of the United States in social studies and history content allows students to form connections between their lived experiences and place in the nation's history and larger society as active participants in a democracy (Busey & Russell 2016; Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Noboa, 2005, 2013; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Takaki, 2008). In providing teachers with content on the history, culture, and sociohistorical realities of the RGV, *Historias Americanas* aimed to address the omissions and limitations in the state's social studies and history curriculum and teachers' pedagogical approaches. The program expanded teachers' knowledge of history content, teaching strategies and pedagogical frameworks so that they can provide their students with content that is relevant to their ethnic and cultural heritage, affirms, their cultural identity, and validates their family's funds of knowledge and community's cultural wealth (Moll et al., 1992, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

In implementing the grant-funded program, the Co-PIs led a team of UTRGV faculty, staff and students and social studies specialists and administrators from ECISD and BISD that collaborated on recruiting 70 teachers, 35 from each district. Most of the district specialists and administrators were curriculum writers for their districts, organizing the institutes and workshops. They also assisted in developing the highlighted content, teaching materials, relevant and affirming pedagogies and activities for the participants. To teach the school content that students can relate to, teachers must know their students' lived experiences, cultural perspective, and communities as well as their own cultural perspective. They also need to know how to integrate cross-cultural content into existing curriculum before they can develop engaging lessons. Teachers learned Mexican American and regional history content that was aligned to the Texas Social Studies standards, (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) from well-known, established scholars who had relevant expertise and publications in specific histories of the region. Scholar presenters provided content on topics, events, and people that most of the teachers had not been exposed to in their preservice education, in-service professional development training or otherwise did not have access.

Topics of the content and hands-on activities included Indigenous peoples of Mexico and the Rio Grande Delta, Spanish-Mexican colonization, government, economic development and population growth in the Spanish-Mexican borderlands of the RGV, civil rights, Mexican American women activists and civil right leaders, and civic engagement in the RGV in the early twentieth-century, the U.S.-Mexico War in the RGV, agriculture, industrialization and the Mexican Revolution in the RGV during the early twentieth century, community leaders in the RGV, place-based education, culturally relevant education, digital storytelling and lesson-planning. The content was presented in ways that explained, modeled, and bolstered the use of place-based education and culturally relevant pedagogies in teaching the new content. The workshops were designed to help teachers connect their own culture and lived experiences to local history, the Mexican American experience, and the larger narrative of American history so that that they could see the value of integrating it into their social studies and history lessons. They also learned culturally relevant teaching strategies and place-based pedagogical approaches to create culturally affirming, place-based lessons and projects that connected the micro realities of local history to the macro context of national and global histories, culture, and geography. For the place-based component of the program, teachers were taken on excursions to local sites such the Museum of South Texas History, La Sal del Rey National Wildlife Refuge, Brownsville Historical Museum, Palo Alto Battlefield-National Historical Park, Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, and the Hidalgo County Pumphouse Museum.

To integrate the new content, pedagogical frameworks, and teaching strategies, teachers had to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000; Valenzuela, 2016) of how the Mexican American experience, history and culture connects to the development of the RGV, Texas, and nation, and see it as American

history. They also had to understand their own cultural background and develop a metacultural awareness to teach students engage in the same process in delivering the lessons. Freire's concept of critical consciousness (*conscientizao*), "the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (Freire, 2000, pp. 26-27), is useful here to describe the cultural awareness and affirmation of the teachers' own cultural background and family story. They continued the development their critical consciousness after creating two digital stories that required them to engage in a dialogical process, reflective writing and creating a narrative that drew from their funds of knowledge, family's lived realities, and community's cultural wealth (González et al., 2005; Moll et al, 1992; Velez-Ibañez. 1987; Yosso, 2005). Freire argued that all human beings were "capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it" (pp. 26-27). Through a dialogical process and self-reflection, people can develop metacultural awareness, and see themselves as historical beings, producers of knowledge, and actors who have the capacity and agency to read and transform the world (pp. 95-96).

In the case of teachers, a critical consciousness is crucial for transformation of teaching and learning and education. Teachers were given opportunities to critically think about their knowledge, limited knowledge or lack of knowledge of local history and national history from the perspective of the Mexican American experience. They were also provided the space to critically think how they can use this knowledge to inspire them to deepen their connections to the social studies and history content they teach and inspire them to see themselves as historical beings and agents of change (Freire, 2000). The aim was to provide them with the knowledge and skills to inspire their students to think critically about society, the world, and their place in the world. To help teachers develop a critical consciousness we worked closely with them and provided them with the teaching tools such as reflective writing, digital-storytelling (Benmayor, 1998, 2008; Millitello & Guajardo, 2013) and oral history (Flores Carmona & Delgado Bernal, 2012), plática (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013) circle, and world café, and primary sources and culturally, historically and geographically relevant content.

The workshops also included a space for teachers to focus on creating supplemental social studies and history lesson plans and curriculum that reflected the history and cultural heritage of the region which does not exist in their standard curriculum. During the lesson planning and writing sessions of the workshops, teachers were guided in creating and designing lesson plans that infused the new content they learned utilizing a lesson planning framework that guided the teachers through several steps to create historically, culturally linguistically and geographically relevant lessons using place-based approaches and projects for their respective grades. All lesson plans and curriculum created through this process also included a place-based, culturally relevant, and bilingual approach to teaching and learning and aligned with the Texas social studies standards, and English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). From this process, the framework below emerged.

## **PURPOSE OF THE CLAP-LC FRAMEWORK FOR P-16 CLASSROOMS**

The main purpose of establishing the framework for teaching content using *Culturally and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogies for Local Context* (CLAP-LC) was to support educators' learning and understanding of the dynamics and complexities of developing culturally relevant content literacy based on the students' historical and geographical context (cultural literacy) through classroom instruction. The



P-16 classrooms include students enrolled in PreKindergarten to 12th grade and university-level (13-16); hence the reference to P-16 classroom. This Framework evolved from the *Framework for Teaching Bilingual/Dual Language Learners New Content Literacy* (Esquierdo, 2010) during the implementation of the *Historias Americanas* grant program described earlier in the chapter. The activities and planned events of the program advanced the original framework to increase the intentionality of developing the teachers' culturally relevant content knowledge of the local community and promoting their, and their students', critical consciousness. The newly designed framework begins with the teacher learning local history content and internalizing the content to strengthen the delivery of their lessons to also support cultural and content literacy. The next sections of the framework integrate the three learning principles, language development theories, culturally relevant pedagogies, place-based practices within a learner-centered environment (see Figure 3). All these components, interacting and intertwining, lead to the development of relevant content and cultural literacy. Therefore, the selection of the pedagogies to the CLAP-LC Framework needed to align to these three goals: deepen the learning and understanding of the local community's history, people, and cultural wealth; promote the development of relevant content literacy (of the local context) in connection with cultural literacy; and foster the development of the critical consciousness of the teacher and student. The learning theories included in the framework also support the student-centered instructional approaches and best practices for first and second/multi-language development.

In general, pedagogy is defined as the connectedness and activity between the teachers and students in the learning environment examining content objectives (Murphy, 2008, p. 35). For this Framework, however, we use Tintiangco-Cubales et al's (2010) definition of pedagogy. They state that pedagogy is an approach to education informed by the educators' and students' "positionality, ideologies, and standpoints. It considers the critical relationships between the purpose of education, the context of education, the content of what is being taught, and the methods of how it is taught" (p. viii). They also add that the identity of the teacher and learner and the dynamics of their relationship must be considered in terms of power and context. It is using this definition and practice of pedagogy that informs the CLAP-LC Framework. Pedagogy is a complex dynamic and can have a significant impact on the students' metacognitive (content) and metacultural (culture) development.

The Framework intertwines the culturally and linguistically affirming (CLA) pedagogies, learning theories, and multilanguage development by focusing on fostering relevant content and cultural literacy, leading to metacultural awareness for students. Placing students' content and cultural literacy at the center of the framework helps select strategies, approaches, materials, and resources that recognizes and values the students' cultural and linguistic assets; their cultural literacy. The Framework begins with the teacher internalizing culturally relevant and sustaining content, pertinent to the students' local context and experiences, to strengthen the delivery of content lessons. The next sections of the Framework integrate the three learning principles, multilanguage development theories, culturally relevant pedagogies, place-based education within a learner-centered environment (see Figure 3). All these components, interacting and intertwining, lead to the development of relevant student content literacy. Content literacy is the acquisition of school content ("standard" curriculum) and learning of culturally relevant and affirming content at a metacognitive level of processing. That is to say that as teachers plan culturally relevant and affirming content lessons to guide students to achieving content and cultural literacy, they facilitate the students' metacognitive processing by asking them to reflect and connect with the content at various cognitive levels. Students process the content internally by thinking about how they can relate to and connect to the content, and externally, by reflecting on how it helps them deepen their understanding of

the broader content. Students can then see themselves and their place in the local community, national narrative, and in the world.

## **INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF CULTURAL LITERACY AND CONTENT LITERACY**

To effectively support the learning process for students, it is vital that there is a clear interconnectedness between cultural literacy and content literacy. Culture, in general, includes people's language, traditions, values, arts, science, beliefs and practices, and their understanding of their environment. Cultural literacy means being able to understand the traditions, regular activities and routines, and history of your own cultural background and that of other groups from a given culture. The development of cultural literacy includes the process of developing metacultural awareness of themselves. It also means being able to engage with these traditions, activities, and history in cultural spaces like the home, community, museums, schools, places of worship, and performances. Therefore, someone who has developed cultural literacy can understand, relate to, and interact with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Flavell et al, 2013). This occurs because they have done the reflective work in internalizing the value of their cultural and community wealth. Content literacy is the ability to use reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and performing, the full continuum of literacy practice, to think and learn about a specific content area, like social studies, math, science, and reading/literature (LeJeune & Landon-Hays, 2021). Content literacy is the acquisition and learning of content at a metacognitive level of processing. To increase the effectiveness of content literacy development, the educator ensures that cultural literacy is fostered and promoted simultaneously as content literacy. This supports the metacultural awareness and critical consciousness development of the educator, and hence the students (see Figure 2). The following sections will describe the essential components of this Framework to support the development of relevant content literacy for P-16 students.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE CLAP-LC FRAMEWORK**

The CLAP-LC Framework encompasses three major areas that support the acquisition of students' relevant content literacy and critical consciousness: Educators' professional development, critical consciousness with multicultural awareness, and the culturally responsive and linguistically affirming pedagogical practices used in the classroom (see Figure 3). These components are not expected to be developed sequentially; but can occur simultaneously as the teachers acquire the content and develop the critical consciousness with multicultural awareness. However, the authors assert that to have effective pedagogical approaches that are culturally relevant, sustaining, and affirming, teachers need to have the content and cultural literacy developed, coupled with a critical consciousness. In the literature on culturally relevant education in the teaching of ethnically diverse students, including Mexican origin and other Latina/o/x students, the authors found a difference between culturally responsive teaching (content) and culturally relevant pedagogy (practice). The framework presented below intertwines the culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010, 2013) and cultural relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014). This type of framework aligns to the definition of culturally relevant education presented by Aronson and Laughter (2015). This framework contributes and expands the larger theories and practices of culturally relevant education.

*Figure 2. Interconnectedness of cultural literacy and content literacy*



**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHER ACQUIRING RELEVANT CONTENT LITERACY AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Studying and acquiring culturally relevant content before an educator is expected to teach lessons centered on that content is an essential element and critical starting point. Teachers cannot teach what they have not yet learned or attained. Noboa (2013) and Sleeter (2015a, 2018) reported that PK-12 teachers have little to no exposure to culturally relevant content and/or ethnic studies during their undergraduate preparation unless they majored or minored in ethnic studies. However, there is a record of literature that supports teachers connecting culturally relevant content to the curriculum to design more effective and impactful lessons for students, especially those of minoritized groups (Busey & Russell 2016; Cabrera

## Instructional Framework for Integrating Cross-Cultural Content

Figure 3. Framework for teaching content using Culturally and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogies for Local Context



et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b, 2014; Noboa, 2005, 2013; Sleeter, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Takaki, 2008). Therefore, educators need to be equipped with a deep and personal understanding of culturally relevant content before they can be expected to teach enriched lessons. In Figure 3, the outer part of the Framework shows how the educators' acquisition of culturally relevant content, through university coursework and/or professional development workshops, sets the framework for teaching content using culturally and linguistically affirming pedagogies within a local context. This type of professional development, through active and engaging workshops, what Freire (2000) referred to as praxis, helped teachers put theory into action. This led to a paradigm shift to asset-based teaching and learning.

The first part of the framework is the teachers' content literacy and critical consciousness (Freire, 2000; Valenzuela, 2016). In the evolution of the framework, the teachers' content literacy and critical consciousness was fostered through interactive, engaging professional development workshops. The four circles in the framework are the planning phase of the lesson. The fifth circle in the framework is the delivery phase that centers on the student-centered environment. A learner-centered environment is one

that focuses the lesson on the students' contribution to the learning process and learning opportunities provided by the teacher. Learner-centered environments involve students making decisions and solving problems throughout the lesson and during the reflection process. In this Framework, the lessons are designed to keep students at the center of the lesson (Durán et al., 2020), incorporating their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) and linguistic repertoire (García & Kleifgen, 2018), to optimize students' learning. The outcome of the lesson is the student's relevant content literacy. The teacher-designed lesson has transformed into the students' relevant content literacy where now the student can make local and global connections and analysis. The Framework can only work if the teacher has a strong hold of the content and cultural literacy and a developed critical consciousness. The Framework is rooted in this understanding and belief. Therefore, critical consciousness leads to metacultural awareness when a person has developed both cultural literacy and content literacy and can internally and externally analyze the impact of these literacies on their perspectives of the world. Metacultural awareness develops as a person connects content literacy with cultural literacy within a metacognitive framework. In addition to reflecting on the interconnectedness of cultural and content literacy, the person also considers how those literacies influence and help shape their views of the world, their community, and their own lived experiences.

## **LEARNING THEORIES FOR THE CLAP-LC FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework used to structure the CLAP-LC Framework presented in this chapter also included several teaching and learning theories, for teaching, learning and language development. One of those theories is the learning principles presented by the National Research Council (2000). The three learning principles that are fundamental for teachers to consider when delivering new content instruction:

- 1) all students attend school with experiences of how the world functions.
- 2) students must acquire basic knowledge and skills and the ability to manipulate that new knowledge so that they can make deeper inquiries; and
- 3) students are equipped to become lifelong learners when they have an opportunity to practice and apply their metacognitive skills.

These three learning principles provide all students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of how the world works. In other words, teachers need to help students connect home knowledge to school knowledge. Using approaches like place-based education, teachers help bridge the local context to the content learning in the classroom. These connections enrich the lessons by connecting the curriculum to the students' knowledge, family experience, and community wealth. Additionally, students can extend those connections beyond their local community on to the world once they have a strong understanding and have had the opportunity to apply their metacognitive skills to the presented content. Finally, students need to be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their new understandings and how it supports the development of their critical consciousness.

Furthermore, the authors included first (L1) and second (L2) language development approaches in the Framework. With the increase of the enrollment of bilingual learners in the schools, more teachers serve students from bilingual homes and communities. Plus, some homes' language use may not directly match the language use of the schools, it is especially important that teachers understand how to leverage

the home language to help students make sense of the language used in the textbooks, even when it is the same language spoken by the students. Therefore, the authors incorporated the dynamic of L1 and L2 proficiency into the Framework through the Contextual Interaction Theory. The recognition of the benefits of the students' bilingualism and biculturalism is critical to help access all the linguistic and cultural assets of the students to enhance their content learning. Considering the bilingual community that surrounds today's U.S. classrooms, acknowledging the L1 and L2 development is being responsible when planning for students from marginalized and minoritized groups. Teaching without considering the language development of students in the classroom is neglecting their linguistic and academic needs. Hence, the focus on the Contextual Interaction Theory in the presented Framework.

## **CULTURALLY REESPONSIVE PEDAGOGIES IN THE CLAP-LC FRAMEWORK**

The integration of culturally and linguistically affirming (CLA) pedagogies is critical for all P-16 students (Gist et al., 2019), especially those that represent marginalized populations. Some of the culturally relevant pedagogies used in this Framework include understanding second/multi-language development theories, funds of knowledge (recognizing and valuing community wealth), place-based learning, local community cultural wealth, tapping into linguistic assets using translanguaging, and using authentic culturally representative content. These instructional approaches celebrate the cultural richness and linguistic diversity that the P-16 students bring to the classroom. Using culturally and linguistically affirming pedagogies supports the effectiveness of instruction in P-16 classrooms. Students of all levels carry their experiences from home and their community that can be used to build and cultivate new knowledge in the formal setting of a classroom. One of the key pedagogical approaches in the Framework is the funds of knowledge. These home experiences and language usage are referred to as the funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; González & Moll, 2002; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). The funds of knowledge are students' everyday life experiences (interactions with family and community members, watching parents work, multilanguage usage at home and throughout the community, grocery store, cooking at home, etc.) that serve as a bridge to school curriculum and practices. Utilizing the funds of knowledge in the classroom validates the students' home experiences at school (Durán et al., 2020).

## **AFFIRMING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC CAPITAL BY USING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THEORIES**

To promote the linguistic and academic needs of students from bilingual homes and/or communities, the second and multi-language development theories are an embedded component of the CLAP-LC Framework. The authors use the term bilingual learners in this chapter to refer to students who come from homes that use a language other than English, and who are learning a second language in school, typically English. This term was selected to highlight and honor the linguistic and cultural assets the students bring to the classroom to use to support their content learning. Bilingual learners (BLs) are also referred to as emergent bilinguals (EBs) (García & Kleifgen, 2018), limited English proficient (LEP), English learners (ELs), or English language learners (ELLs). Bilingual learners (BLs) can be served in several types of bilingual programs, depending on the program selected by the school district. The second/multi-language theories used in the Framework are anchored on five empirically supported

principles: linguistic threshold, dimensions of language proficiency, common underlying proficiency, second-language acquisition, and student status (Gass & Mackey, 2007; González et al., 2006; Krashen, 1982). The interaction of these five principles demonstrates how student experiences with language interact with instructional practice. Second and multi-language development theories consider language acquisition to be interactive because of students can negotiate with their environment to reinforce the language learning. This also suggests that the culture and environment in which language is being learned are highly instrumental in the students' development. The education of students from bilingual communities of marginalized and minoritized groups depends on the delivery of academically rigorous and linguistically appropriate instruction by their teachers.

The linguistic threshold in second/multi-language development is a hypothesis (Cummins, 1976) that asserts that to gain proficiency in a second language, the learners must also have passed an age- and grade appropriate level of competence in their first language. In other words, the students' level of proficiency in their L1 supports the development of their L2. Cummins also asserted that a minimum threshold in language proficiency must be reached before a person can procure any benefits from the learned languages. This is to say that if the students' level of proficiency in L1 and/or L2 is not at a minimum level, they will not secure the positive benefits of being bilingual/multilingual. It is vital that a teacher working with bilingual students understands the linguistic threshold as they plan effective lessons and focus on supporting language development in the two or more languages. When considering the dimensions of language proficiency, the teachers need to understand what Cummins (1980, 2016) argued that cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) can be analytically recognized from basic inter-personal communicative skills (BICS) in both L1 and L2. Cummins also stated that CALP in both L1 and L2 are interdependent meaning the relationship between L1 and L2 are indications of a common underlying proficiency. This explains that the content the students learn in one language can be applied to their other language, since the knowledge and development of skills already occurred in one language. The teacher does not have to reteach content already learned in one language.

Student status (Cummins, 1991) refers to both the language spoken by students from bilingual homes/communities and status as experienced in the regular interactions between teachers and students and students and students and students. The student status reflects the microlevel contacts that the bilingual student has with others in schools and how his/her/their languages are perceived by others and themselves every day. These interactions are loaded with covert and often overt messages about the student and his/her/their first language and culture. The interaction between the context of the home and that of the school supports the students' language development and content understanding to develop relevant content and cultural literacy. Considering the increase of bilingual students enrolling in U.S. schools, more teachers now work in schools that serve a largely bilingual, bicultural community; therefore, it was critical to include first (L1) and second (L2) language development theories. Therefore, the authors included the dynamic of L1 and L2 proficiency into the framework through the second and multi-language development theories. The recognition of the benefits of the students' bilingualism in the classroom is critical to help access all the linguistic assets of the students to enhance the learning. Considering the bilingual community that surrounds the classroom, acknowledging the L1 and L2 development within culturally relevant content is a salient factor in lesson development, especially one that develops relevant content literacy.

## **Language Development Strategies for the CLAP-LC Framework**

The CLAP-LC Framework incorporates second and multi-language development theories in the Framework to support both L1 and L2 acquisition. When crafting lesson plans using the Framework, teachers are guided to focus on L1 and L2 development by carefully selecting effective strategies that foster the development of language, especially the language register used in textbooks and other educational resources for each lesson. One of the main goals of the language development strategies is to provide bilingual learners opportunities to listen, speak, read, write, and reflect about their current stages of language development. This is critical as they progress through their linguistic development in all the languages they are acquiring. Therefore, students are developing content and cultural literacy as they gradually strengthen in their linguistic development. Examples of these language development strategies include using the diverse sheltered instructional strategies (Echevarria et al., 2008), the use of cooperative learning activities with purposefully selected heterogeneous grouping of students; support for comprehensible content with the use of visuals, vocabulary support, and games, and a focus on hands-on, authentic activities that engage the students, especially bilingual learners.

Another second/multi-language development strategy is allowing and validating translanguaging in the classroom. Translanguaging is when students use their linguistic and cognitive resources to make sense of the academic content being delivered in a formal setting (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is a strategy educators can use to help students draw on all their linguistic capital as they read, write, discuss, and reflect on the school content using all the language assets they possess. Through translanguaging, students' home language and the developing language serves as a scaffold in the process of acquiring additional languages and academic content in the classroom. Therefore, students can leverage their linguistic capital to acquire the school content delivered in the classroom. For clarification, translanguaging does not only come in the form of code-switching. Translanguaging is the metalinguistic exercise students experience when learning new content. When teachers create a learning environment conducive to translanguaging, with the use of other second/multi-language strategies, students' ability to learn relevant content while strengthening their biliteracy/multiliteracy skills is attainable.

## **PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

Once educators learn, understand, and internalize the information of the local community from either university preparation and/or professional development programs, teachers can begin the process of integrating the newly acquired content to enhance the current curriculum. This can occur by enriching their daily lesson plans and delivering those plans through cultural affirming and place-based pedagogies. Using the above Framework that includes Professional Development, Critical Consciousness with multicultural awareness, and the Culturally Responsive and Linguistically Affirming Pedagogical practices, teachers can guide students develop relevant content literacy and develop their own critical consciousness. By using place-based education, a variety of lessons can be created that are directly connected to the local context.

Additionally, place-based education (PBE) can be used as a form of a CLA pedagogy when it is used with intention to validate the students' community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). PBE was designed as an educational approach that actively connects schools and their local communities (Smith, 2007;



Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sobel, 2005). While PBE is a broad pedagogical framework that can be applied to content and context, it can also be applied to specific content areas, regions, communities and integrated into most curriculum (Gruenewald, 2003). PBE positions the place where students and their teachers live and the stories of their communities at the center of curricular lessons. It thus connects the teaching and learning process of the classroom to the local community in which students live. PBE allows for an educational process that helps students cultivate deeper connections to their community and amplify their commitment to serving their communities as responsible citizens (Sobel, 2004). These connections between the students' lives, their community, and school help strengthen the effectiveness of the content lessons in the classroom. Thus, this authentic connection between the students' community and the teachers' curricular lessons strengthens the development of content literacy for the students.

## **LEARNER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT USING HISTORICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY RELEVANT CONTENT**

A learner-centered environment is one that focuses the lesson on the students' contribution to the learning process and learning opportunities provided by the teacher. Learner-centered environments involve students in making decisions and solving problems throughout the lesson and during the reflection process. In this Framework, the lessons are designed to keep students at the center of the lesson, incorporating their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006) and linguistic repertoire (García & Kleifgen, 2018), to optimize students' learning. When a teacher is not cognizant of keeping the learning environment student-centered, the lesson can evolve into a more teacher-centered, that is, the teacher may lecture more and move away from the students' funds of knowledge and cultural wealth at the center (Moll et al., 2006; Yosso, 2005). Having a teacher-centered classroom results from the banking approach described by Friere (2000), where the teacher deposits the information to the student with little to no engagement or input from the student. This is not an effective way to deliver instruction to any group of students, especially those of marginalized and minoritized communities. Therefore, this Framework ensured the students are the focus of the content and instruction.

## **CONCLUSION**

When the goal is to develop students' relevant content literacy and metacultural awareness, it is vital that the teachers learn the culturally relevant content and have opportunities to internalize the implications of that added content to the existing school curriculum. Using the CLAP-LC Framework presented in this chapter, teachers are encouraged to continue their own learning and reflecting on the value of culturally relevant content to support their own metacultural awareness and that of their students. Additionally, they are equipped with various culturally relevant and affirming instructional methods. The Framework also guides teachers to recognize and validate the L1 and L2 development. This is accomplished by selecting opportunities to listen, speak, read, write, and practice their metalinguistic skills with intention and purpose. This leads to students' development of cultural and content literacy by using cultural and linguistic affirming (CLA) experiences. Therefore, students are learning culturally relevant content in a student-affirming environment as they gradually increase in their L1 and L2 development and practice. When cultural relevant content lessons incorporate learning theories and second/multi-language

development approaches in the designing phase, and infuse CLA pedagogies in the delivery stage, it is key to also establish a critical consciousness to promote an authentic learner-centered environment using historically and geographically relevant content to provide an equitable education for all students (Freire, 2000; Valenzuela, 2016). The historically and geographically relevant content is what roots the curriculum to the students' experiences and community and cultural wealth. It is crucial to note here that a necessary first step in the CLAP-LC Framework is for teachers to learn the local historical, cultural, and geographical relevant content, including teachers' and students' funds of knowledge, connect to it at a personal level, and see the connection to the curriculum. Then, once they have an opportunity to process and analyze those content resources, they can begin to design lessons that support the students' relevant content literacy.

The Framework presented supports and fosters cross-cultural content instruction by using culturally and linguistically affirming pedagogies in the design and delivery of the lessons. With the lessons using more relevant and authentic resources, the use of the CLAP-LC Framework can increase student engagement and academic performance (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016). This occurs when students feel included and see their experiences in the content and validated through the instructional approaches and materials. Their interest in the content deepens their connection to the world around them. Additionally, this instructional approach can build capacity for the school district by using teachers as curriculum reformers and leaders. The teachers' understanding of the elements of the framework is crucial to designing cross-cultural lessons. This can have a significant impact on teachers' influence on the curriculum and instruction throughout the district. Empowering students and teachers in this way can have an impact on education beyond the P-16 classroom.

The content, curriculum, and resources that emanated from the *Historias Americanas* professional development program and lesson plan framework is a good example of how to show teachers what Culturally Relevant Education can look like in their classroom. This can improve the teaching and learning of P-16 content that resonates with teachers and students, the initial intension of the grant. One of the grant's findings was that when teachers learn the history and culture of the local community, which also reflects their own culture and history, their instruction becomes more relevant to the students. When the teachers are excited and engaged in their own learning, it can translate to a more inspiring and effective delivery of the content to the students that leads to relevant content literacy. Therefore, teachers who develop critical consciousness are better equipped to advocate for educational equity by providing content that is culturally and linguistically relevant (Valenzuela, 2016). This approach to teaching and learning affirms the teachers' and students' ethnic and cultural identity by using and further developing their cultural funds of knowledge, metacultural awareness, and biliteracy. By teaching culturally relevant content using respective and affirming ways, the teachers become agents of change (Arrellano et al., 2016) by breaking the cycle of how students from minoritized and marginalized groups have been educated in the U.S.; a process that has been rooted and still rooted in deficit thinking. Ultimately, the goal of the Framework is for teachers and students to view themselves as agents of social change.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Content Literacy:** The acquisition of school content, curriculum, and learning of culturally relevant and affirming content at a metacognitive level of processing. Students process the new content by thinking about how they can relate to the content and by reflecting on how it helps them deepen their understanding of the content.

**Critical Consciousness:** The development of self-awareness through a liberatory educational process that promotes the search of self-affirmation and engagement in the historical process through action.

**Cultural Capital:** The collection of knowledge, experiences, and skills that a person gains from their family, local community, and other social groups.

**Cultural literacy:** Being able to understand the traditions, regular activities and routines, and history of your own cultural background and that of other groups from a given culture using a critical lens.

**Culturally Affirming Pedagogy:** A teaching approach that acknowledges diverse students' cultural practices, language, and knowledge as assets and helps students appreciate their own cultural identities through positive self-reflection.

**Culturally Responsive Content:** Subject matter that students can relate to because it highlights or reflects their unique lived experiences, culture, language, and identity.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** A teaching method that acknowledges and supports the students and community’s culture and knowledge as assets in the classroom to make learning more meaningful. An instructional process that highlights students’ culture in the curriculum to help them develop a critical consciousness to promote academic success and educational equity.

**Linguistic Capital:** An individual’s ability to leverage their language(s) pragmatics and power dynamics relevant to time, place, and manner based on the social and/or academic setting.

**Place-Based Connection:** Learning that links the students’ locality, environment, community, and socio-cultural context in the curriculum and encourages students to reflect on and critically examine their own community in relation to the larger community to understand their place in the world.

**Student-Centered Environment:** A learning space that focuses the lesson on the students’ contribution to the learning process and learning opportunities provided by the teacher.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau uses the pan-ethnic terms Hispanic and Latino/a interchangeably to classify a diverse population who have origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, other parts of the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and Spain (<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/texas/hispanic-or-latino-population-percentage#map>). In this essay we mostly use the terms Mexican American, Mexican descent, or Mexican origin to accurately portray the demographic reality of the Rio Grande Valley.
- <sup>2</sup> See Ennis, et al. 2011 and <https://immigrationimpact.com/2022/06/02/hispanic-americans-in-the-rio-grande-valley/>.
- <sup>3</sup> See <https://riograndeguardian.com/new-research-shows-economic-power-of-hispanic-households-in-rgv/>