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Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction and Social–Emotional Teaching Practices for Linguistically Diverse Learners in the United States

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**Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction and Social–Emotional Teaching
Practices for Linguistically Diverse Learners in the United States**

By

Wing Shuen Lau

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

Seattle Pacific University

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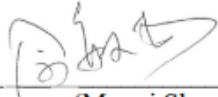
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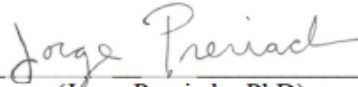
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Date

Jun 30 2023

Dedication

I dedicate this work to God, my source of light and wisdom when I am in the darkness of understanding. To my husband, who has encouraged me to pursue my passion for teaching. To my parents, whose unwavering and unconditional love have brought me to where I am today. To my mentors and teachers, who have invested in me and helped me grow both personally and professionally. To my students, whose trust, kind words, and inspiration have motivated me to be a better educator.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	2
English Language Learners in the U.S. Education System	6
Needs for Integrating SEL to Promote Student Success.....	12
Role of Culturally Responsive SEL in Literacy Instruction	15
Gaps in Literature	18
Purpose of the Study	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	22
CRT in U.S. Schools.....	22
2000s and Beyond.....	26
Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices of CRT	27
CRT in Literacy Instruction	31
History and Conception of SEL.....	33
Theoretical Frameworks of SEL.....	35
SEL Programs and Interventions in Schools	38
Educators’ Beliefs Toward SEL	41
Integrating SEL in Literacy Instruction	44
Summary of Literature	48
Chapter Three: Specific Content of Journal Manuscripts.....	50
Hidden Voices: How Chinese Immigrant Educators Implement Culturally Inclusive Practices in U. S. Classrooms.....	51

Theoretical Frameworks for Culturally Inclusive Practices in the Asian American Context	53
Empirical Literature Review on Immigrant Teachers' CRT Practices	56
Research Methodology	58
Findings.....	65
Limitations	74
Discussions	74
Conclusion and Implications.....	77
References.....	78
Empowering English Learners in the Classroom through Culturally Responsive Social–Emotional Teaching Practices.....	83
Overview of Social–Emotional Learning Frameworks	84
Culturally Responsive Strategies for Integrating SEL in English Language Teaching.....	89
Concluding Thoughts and Future Directions	107
References.....	110
Chapter 4: Synthesis and Conclusion	121
Overall Findings.....	122
Significance of Studies	123
Implications for Practice	125
Future Research	127
Observational Studies in Diverse Classrooms	127
Language Choice in Qualitative Studies.....	128

Curriculum Innovation in Teacher Education Programs	129
Conclusion	130
References.....	132

List of Figures

Figure 1: The CULTURE Pedagogical Approach 109

List of Tables

Table 1: Adapted AsianCrit Framework for Asian American Teachers in the United States	55
Table 2: Coding System of Participant Responses	64
Table 3: Summary of Key Practices and Examples of CULTURE Pedagogical Approach.....	94

Abstract

This dissertation includes two previous research studies with a central theme to sustain and advance culturally and linguistically responsive practices in literacy instruction, which are essential for promoting diversity and equity. This work highlights the need for a more holistic approach to English language teaching that integrates culturally responsive teaching and social–emotional learning. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. Social–emotional learning focuses on developing students’ emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, which are critical for academic success and overall well-being. Both studies call for a greater diversity of language teacher preparation curricula and teaching practices that incorporates cultural and social–emotional competencies into coursework to empower teachers to effectively engage students from diverse backgrounds and make literacy learning experiences relevant to their communities and meaningful to their cultural identities. The findings of these studies reveal implications for teacher education and literacy instruction for diverse learners. There are several potential research directions highlighted in the final chapter.

Keywords: Culturally responsive teaching, social–emotional learning, literacy instruction, English language learners, teacher education programs, pedagogical approaches, interdisciplinary research

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout U.S. history, the concept of equality, which emphasizes equal rights, resources, and opportunities for all, has influenced many generations since the Declaration of Independence (Center for Public Education, 2016). Although equality has been a fundamental value across disciplines in U.S. education, there has been an upsurge in focus on the notion of equity, which urges for customized resources and opportunities based on individual needs to achieve success. In the 19th century, Horace Mann, known as the “Father of American Education” (Mann, 1848, as cited in Bates, 2010, p. 1181) emphasized that education should ensure equal opportunities for all children of any class to succeed. Mann’s concept of “education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (Mann, 1848, as cited in Bates, 2010, p. 1181) has long been viewed as a foundational belief of U.S. schooling. “The great equalizer” indicated that every individual would have the opportunity to pursue their success regardless of their socioeconomic status, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Despite the advocacy for individual freedom and equal opportunities, students in the United States, especially students who come from historically marginalized communities (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and people with special educational needs), are still implicitly expected to assimilate to the Western cultural norms and conform to the values of individuality and meritocracy in K–12 settings (Patel, 2016). The expression historically marginalized denotes groups that experience marginalization in accessing better life prospects due to discriminatory practices and historical societal obstacles such

as segregation, voting suppression, and restricted educational opportunities) based on someone's race, gender, and sexual orientation. Patel (2016) pointed out:

Black, Indigenous, and people of color are told regularly through their surroundings, through the Eurocentric curricula of schools and universities, that they are lesser or that they do not even exist, and inaccurate histories are presented as impermeable truth, strengthened through each false reprinting. (p. 257)

Too often, academic and cultural challenges (e.g., differences in cultural norms and practices encountered by students) are interpreted as the result of individual shortcomings rather than the failure of school leadership to provide inclusive education services (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Many students, despite their collectivistic cultural backgrounds, are expected to conform to individualistic values, both implicitly and explicitly. These cultural challenges can manifest in interpersonal relationships and impact students' abilities to foster positive interactions and resolve problems with others from different cultural backgrounds. The obstacles arising from cultural differences may create additional stressors for immigrant students who need to adjust to different cultural norms and values in an unfamiliar educational environment.

Based on my observations, issues surrounding race, gender, and class in U.S. history have perpetuated anxiety, hopelessness, and hatred, which are the by-products of fear, over generations of school-aged students. In retrospect, only European immigrants were perceived to be White enough to assimilate into dominant U.S. culture during the 19th and 20th centuries when the other racial groups, such as Black individuals, Latinos, and Chinese Americans, were treated by racial hierarchies (DiAngelo, 2018). In 1882,

U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that restricted Chinese immigration to the United States (National Archives, n.d.). Back then, public schools had been racially segregated until the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional in the case *Brown v. Board of Education 1954* (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). During the early and mid-20th century, students of color and their families often had to protect their rights on grounds of race and nationality and fight against the discriminatory and racial segregation policies in the U.S. educational system (e.g., *Roberto Alvarez v. The Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*, 1931, as cited in Bordelon, 2022). U.S. public schools barely provided any supplemental courses to help students of color improve English proficiency at that time. Children from minoritized groups were not challenged or given sufficient resources to show their competencies. A typical example was the use of an IQ test during the 1950s and 1960s with immigrants and other minoritized groups. Some Mexican students were regarded as mentally retarded in the IQ tests due to the inadequate testing devices used (Hill, 1965).

After almost a century, the Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) that public schools should provide non-English-speaking students with English support and develop plans to improve the English proficiency skills of students who do not speak English as their home language. Even though Black students and other racially minoritized students have opportunities to attend public school with White students, schools remain segregated by ethnicity in some school districts. This includes the fact that Black children are more likely to attend high-poverty schools when compared to White children (United States Government Accountability Office, 2022).

To promote equitable education, it is essential for educators to understand how interactions with structural inequalities have informed their students' lived experiences and language acquisition (Sleeter, 2016). Framed in an equity lens, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and social–emotional learning (SEL) add important historical and contemporary contexts for integrating inclusive and holistic classroom practices so educators can weave in actionable goals that address issues such as racist beliefs, colonization, power, class disparity, and privilege.

In 2022, the Education Trust and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) released a digital tool rating the 50 states across the nation to identify the efforts for supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development through an equity lens (The Education Trust, 2022). The six key policy areas mentioned in the tool included (a) discipline; (b) rigorous and culturally sustaining curriculum; (c) educator diversity; (d) professional development; (e) student, family, and community engagement; and (f) wraparound services. Based on the data as of 2021 shown in the tool, most states failed to meet criteria for fostering rigorous and culturally sustaining curriculum. Among the states reviewed, only New Mexico has issued guidance on selecting culturally sustaining curricula aligned with standards. Just three states, Hawaii, California, and New York, provide both guidance and funding for schools and districts to adopt curricula that integrate social justice materials or culturally sustaining learning in core subjects to connect students with local heritages, cultures, and experiences, as indicated by the tool.

English Language Learners in the U.S. Education System

Before I further discuss the state of culturally responsive education for English learners (ELs), it would be important to consider how students are categorized under different terms because some terms, such as English as a second language (ESL), may be a misleading label to describe certain students who learn English as their third or more language. Other terms such as language minority students and limited English proficient students tend to perpetuate the fixed mindset and deficit thinking associated with students who lack English proficiency to achieve academic success in school. Instead, terms such as emergent bilinguals/multilinguals and English as an additional language have been referenced to reframe the terms LEP and ESL in the field of English language learners (ELL) literacy instruction (Gunderson, 2020).

The terms ELs, ELLs, culturally and linguistically diverse learners, multilingual learners (MLs) in K–12 settings have been used interchangeably (New York State Education Department, n.d.). Specifically, ELs and ELLs are defined under the federal law and used by the U.S. Department of Education (2016) to describe students who are aged between three and 21, enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school, and whose birthplace is not in the United States or whose native language is not English. ELs and ELLs are widely used terms in U.S. schools to refer to students enrolled in ELL programs that offer additional English proficiency support for learning academic content.

To further clarify, the term culturally and linguistically diverse decenters the predominant role of English as a language for academic learning in K–12 schools and better reflects the various linguistic, social, cultural, and economic background

knowledge that students bring to their classrooms in the United States. In addition, the term multilingual learners has gained popularity in the field of K–12 education in the United States to refer to ELs who are in the process of learning English. MLs is also commonly used to describe students who are consistently exposed to a language or languages other than English. ELs, ELLS, or culturally and linguistically diverse learners do not refer to a homogeneous group of students such as newcomers or immigrants; rather, they describe a highly and complexly heterogeneous population, where students are acquiring English proficiency and have a first language other than English or in addition to English.

In this dissertation, for consistency's sake, the term ELs is used to describe school-aged students participating in English language development programs, whereas the term MLs is used to refer to students acquiring English in tandem with their first language in public schools. Finally, culturally and linguistically diverse learners broadly refers to students whose home language is not English. The demographics of students in the public educational systems from kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12) have become increasingly diverse in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023a), making it pivotal for educators to consider and incorporate culturally responsive instruction practices to meet the academic and social–emotional needs of students.

Between Fall 2010 and Fall 2021, demographic distributions of public school students across the nation shifted as the percentage of White students decreased from 52% to 45% (NCES, 2023a). By Fall 2021, the racial/ethnic composition of U.S. public school students was White (45%), Black (15%), Hispanic (28%), Asian (5.4%),

Indigenous/Alaska Native (0.9%), two or more races (5%), and Pacific Islander (less than 0.5%; NCES, 2023a). The NCES (2023d) projected that between 2016 and 2028, students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States will continue to be racially and ethnically diverse, with a 1% increase for students who are Black, 8% increase for students who are Hispanic, 20% increase for students who are Asian/Pacific Islander, 7% decrease for students who are Indigenous/Alaska Native, and 51% increase for students who are of two or more races. The U.S. student population has become more diversified since the 2000s, yet many schools remain segregated in terms of race, ethnicity, and economic status. During the 2020–2021 school year, “more than one-quarter of Hispanic and Black students, and more than one-fifth of Indigenous/Alaska Native students, attended an almost-exclusively Hispanic, Black, and Indigenous/Alaska Native school and these students as a group have higher rates of poverty” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022, p. 14).

Similarly, the percentage of ELs or ELLs in U.S. public schools has also steadily grown from 9.2% in Fall 2010 to 10.3% in Fall 2020, and approximately two thirds of states identified at least 6% of their students as ELs or ELLs (NCES, 2023b). In 2015, the National Education Association (NEA; 2015) stated, “In just two short decades, ELL enrollment in U.S. schools has grown 57%, compared to less than 4% growth for all students” (p. 6). In the 2020–2021 school year, approximately two thirds (67%) of all public school teachers had at least one EL student in their class, yet only 47.9% of these teachers took any courses on how to teach EL students and only 10.1% of these teachers have a major, minor, or certification in ESL (NCES, 2022). Although the population of ELs has been fast growing in U.S. public schools over the past few decades, the

population of teachers remains over 80% White in both public and private elementary and secondary schools (NCES, 2023c). Among all public K–12 school teachers in 2022, 9% were Hispanic, 6% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 2% were of two or more races (NCES, 2022).

Although the number of ELs is steadily growing in the United States, they are disproportionately underrepresented in gifted and talented programs (Allen et al., 2016). A survey by the Office of English Language Acquisition showed that only 1.5% of ELs were enrolled in gifted and talented programs during the 2017–2018 school year, compared to 7.2% of non-EL students (OSEP, 2022). Because many of these programs are language based, intellectually advanced ELs who do not speak English fluently may be easily overlooked when they are screened by tests in English instruction, leading to missed opportunity to enter gifted programs at a younger age. On the other hand, the Office of Special Education Programs data found the number of students with disabilities that were ELs grew by close to 30% during the school year 2012–2013 (Office of Special Education Programs, 2022). The validity of the special education identification process for ELs is a concern due to the misevaluation of their abilities because their level of English language proficiency and learning progress may not align with assessment benchmarks.

Biased perceptions of labeling students as limited in English proficiency from schools can also contribute to the challenges ELs face (Her, 2009). Rather than allowing them to develop biliteracy in both English and their home language, there is often an expectation that they transition quickly to an English-only curriculum. ELs are often viewed as passive recipients of remedial support that address their lack of English

language skills and diagnose their difficulties in core subjects such as math and language arts. The English-only policy does not only impact ELs in language instruction education programs but also students whose home language is not English. According to Mitchell et al. (2012), students in schools often subscribe to the ideology that English is “all that matters” (p. 6) because high-stakes assessments and academic courses required for graduation are almost always conducted in standard English, and these students who attain higher levels of English proficiency ordinarily become “invisible in that their multilingualism or varied assets and learning needs are not taken into account in mainstream classroom contexts” (Mitchell, 2012, p. 14). The English-only ideology can lead to students and their families believing that English is the only correct language in school while their home language is a barrier to academic success rather than a resource. As a result, many ELs experience a significant loss of proficiency in their home language. It is not until 2016 that more states, including the states that passed the English-only instruction law (e.g., California and Massachusetts), began to pave the way for equity-based policies. More school systems in the United States are transitioning to multilingual programs and instructional support that can meet the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

Besides academic barriers, ELs in public schools may also experience social and emotional challenges that impact their sense of school belonging (Shi & Watkinson, 2019). They may feel like outsiders in schools due to language and cultural differences, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and disengagement. Furthermore, ELs may experience linguistic oppression that hinders their use of first language as a valuable resource tool for learning academic skills and developing metalinguistic awareness. As a

result of linguistic barriers, ELs may experience difficulty forming meaningful relationships with teachers and peers, which can negatively impact their social–emotional development. These challenges may also lead to a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, and anxiety, which can affect academic performance and overall well-being (Rodriguez et al. 2020).

Based on the information provided, cultural and linguistic diversity is an important factor that influences students’ educational experiences, academic outcomes, and social–emotional well-being. A literature review prepared by the U.S. Department of Education (2012) stated that ELs’ outcomes are often positively associated with a school’s receptive attitude toward other languages and cultures. Teacher education researchers have demonstrated that emotions are intertwined with learning experiences (Posey, 2019; Sprenger, 2020). Students’ social–emotional challenges in schools, such as bullying, linguistic discrimination, and conflicts, can affect their behavior and ability to process new information. Prior research has consistently shown that students’ social skills and behaviors are positively correlated with their academic achievements (Malecki & Elliot, 2002; Wentzel, 1993). A suggestion for teachers and administrators is to use culturally responsive support and resources to address ELs’ social–emotional and cultural needs along with their academic development. By valuing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, educators and policymakers can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that ensure all students have access to high-quality education that prepares them for success.

Needs for Integrating SEL to Promote Student Success

Standardized testing is least likely to provide substantial data to reflect students' all-around development (Schneider, 2017). In the wake of the publication of *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform* in the early 1980s (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), many U.S. states started to increasingly focus on the implementation of standards-based and assessment-driven curricula for the subject areas such as English language arts and math in school. Entering the 21st century, education reforms aiming at ensuring school accountability (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; School Choice Executive Order, 2020) have been initiated at the national level. In response to the standards-based educational reforms, more teachers have adopted an assessment-driven curriculum or a scripted curriculum that corresponds with the statewide content standards, performance standards, and standardized learning outcomes. However, the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that between 2009 and 2017, there was only a slight increase in the percentage of ELs reaching proficiency rates in Grade 4 and Grade 8 reading and mathematics nationally, and their performance was still far behind their non-EL peers (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Increasingly implementing standardized testing has made little impact on promoting students' holistic growth and narrowing achievement gaps because not all the essential skills that prepare students for success can be assessed by standardized testing.

Students in the 21st century not only require the traditional core academic subject knowledge to thrive in education but also need to develop additional learning skills such as social and cross-cultural communication, accountability, responsibility, adaptability,

and leadership (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) to better adapt to future workplaces during the rapid transformations of technologies and the expansion of global collaborations. A variety of 21st-century skills frameworks indicate the importance of deeper learning, which necessitates whole-child education. For instance, the National Research Council (2012) described that 21st century skills for life and work comprise three domains of competencies: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (2007) identified four essential learning outcomes for graduates of higher education: (a) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, (b) intellectual and practical skills, (c) personal and social responsibility, and (d) integrative and applied learning. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21, 2009) organization in the United States defined the four Cs for deeper learning competencies and skills: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) critical thinking, and (d) creativity. Besides the four Cs, the P21 has also listed six key skills for students to prepare for their readiness in K–12 education during the 21st century, which include (a) core subjects, (b) 21st-century content, (c) learning and thinking skills, (d) information and communication technologies literacy, (e) life skills, and (f) 21st-century assessments. The World Health Organization listed a core set of life skills that educators can use to teach students how to make better decisions for success in daily living (WHO, 2020). The skills include decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. In summary, these frameworks emphasize that students need a range of psychosocial competencies to manage their lives inside and outside of school. A feasible

way to help school-aged students acquire and reinforce these 21st-century skills is to explicitly incorporate the strategies to teach these skills in daily classroom practices.

In K–12 education, the integrative model of SEL and academic curricula such as English language arts, social studies, math, and science has raised a wide interest among educators (Greenberg et al., 2003; Reicher, 2010). Over the past few years, the term transformative SEL has frequently appeared in the field of education to underscore how SEL practices can advance equity and excellence through the “explicit critical examination of the root causes of racial and economic inequities to foster the desired critical self- and social awareness and responsible individual and collective actions in young people and adults” (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 178). Jagers et al. (2019) clearly defined transformative SEL as “a means to better articulate the potential of SEL to mitigate the educational, social, and economic inequities that derive from the interrelated legacies of racialized cultural oppression in the United States and globally” (p. 163).

The concept of transformative SEL calls for affirming students’ diverse cultures and identities and respecting students’ own experiences about the world (Jagers et al., 2019). It is a collaborative goal for educators, students, families, and communities to take actions to reverse injustices in the educational systems. Researchers have urged transformative practices that explore students’ cultural assets and orientations and their own practices for emotion regulation, self-concept, and communication (Ramirez et al., 2021; Simmons, 2017). Researchers have suggested that SEL curricula or interventions have been correlated with positive student outcomes including responsible decision making, improved test scores, grades, and school attendance (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2007). SEL is an integral part of education and human development. In the process of

SEL, youth and adults acquire and apply the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that let them build healthy identities, manage their emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, demonstrate empathy, build relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020). SEL-embedded lessons focus on activating students' metacognitive skills (i.e., how they perceive themselves as a learner) and engage students in tapping into their backgrounds and lived experiences.

Role of Culturally Responsive SEL in Literacy Instruction

Scholars have argued that schools should provide curricula and interventions that emphasize more than academic skills development, acknowledge the impact of systemic bias in the educational system, help students tap into their cultural and community assets, and cultivate the concepts of equity and justice for teachers and students to disrupt and dismantle prejudices and injustices (Gorski, 2013; Hammond, 2015). At the center of the diversity conversations (e.g., embracing and teaching for differences in the classroom) in U.S. education, many schools are striving to create a sustainable environment that prioritizes the idea of acknowledging students' racial identities, linguistic assets, and cultural backgrounds through the lens of equity (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Rogers et al. (2019) conducted a study with a nationally representative sample of school principals and found schools are impacted by challenges including (a) political division and hostility, (b) untrustworthy information, (c) the opioid crisis, (d) the threat of immigration enforcement, and (e) the threat of gun violence. Amid these societal and global issues, more schools have prioritized helping students learn how to communicate with peers of diverse cultural backgrounds and build positive relationships with others.

CRT is another approach that connects students and taps into their background knowledge and prior experiences (Gay, 2018). This approach helps teachers see their students' cultural differences as assets, so teachers can adopt a strength-based approach to capitalize on students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and make learning more relevant to students' lives. With the implementation of SEL through the lens of culturally responsive practices, students with different worldviews learn how to validate their linguistic and cultural assets; raise cultural awareness; and develop cognitive regulation, emotional processing, and interpersonal communication in a safe, respectful environment.

Over the past three decades, a myriad of pedagogical frameworks and models have suggested a paradigm shift from a deficient-based approach to an asset-based approach to instructing diverse students in K–12 settings. These frameworks and models suggest that effective classroom instruction should be student-centered and rigorously guided with motivating content. For example, universal design for learning provided flexible strategies to guide teachers through customizing the presentation of content that enables all students to have equal opportunities to learn and to demonstrate what they learn in various ways (Center for Applied Special Technology, n.d.). The instructional framework of sheltered instruction observation protocol for ELs emphasizes that content area lessons should engage students in meaningful ways by helping them interact with others in the target language and making the content comprehensible (Echevarria et al., 2000). Another instructional model is guided language acquisition design, which is applied to teaching English language development and literacy, accentuates the importance of activating students' prior knowledge and building background knowledge (Brechtel, 2001). Many of these instructional frameworks highlight how to make content

(i.e., input) more comprehensible and academically challenging and how to make assessments (i.e., output) more accessible.

Communication is often not merely formed with spoken or written words; human discourse is filled with emotions, accents, and cultural references (Elfenbein, 2013). Students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring with them a variety of perspectives and worldviews, making their interactions nuanced and complex. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that students' emotional experiences play a significant role in how they engage in the learning process. Students struggling with emotional or behavioral problems are more susceptible to obstacles in applying content knowledge and prosocial skills vital to their success both inside and outside school. For instance, a student experiencing anger or frustration may have difficulty effectively expressing their thoughts with peers or teachers. A student who is not comfortable with sharing feelings openly may find it challenging to talk about their issues in group discussions. As such, a learning environment that promotes both academic and social–emotional growth is essential to equip students with the tools to succeed academically and beyond.

With equity-based and inclusive literacy practices, both teachers and students share the space to acquire information that connects with their existing knowledge repertoire (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019). Although some students may need additional guidance, they should be viewed as active participants in their own learning, not as patients or at-risk individuals requiring treatment. The focus should be on creating an environment where students feel empowered to learn and explore their potential. Literacy classrooms can play a pivotal role in shaping students into socially responsible humans, who are not only capable of self-regulating their emotions and behaviors but also

cultivating resilience and a growth mindset to disrupt and dismantle unjust practices and systems (Lau & Shea, 2022). The key objective of culturally responsive SEL in literacy instruction is to enable teachers to construct meaningful, rigorous language learning experiences that recognize the racial and cultural diversity of their students, while also promoting their social–emotional development.

Gaps in Literature

As classrooms in the U.S. public school system become increasingly diverse in terms of students' racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, there is a continuing shortage of educators who reflect those demographics. For example, in Washington State, teachers of color in the year 2020–2021 account for 13% of the workforce (0.3% Pacific Islander, 1.8% multiracial, 5.3% Hispanic, 1.5% Black, 3% Asian, and 0.7% Indigenous) compared to 49% of students of color (1.2% Pacific Islander, 8.8% multiracial, 24.6% Hispanic, 4.5% Black, 8.3% Asian, and 1.3% Indigenous; Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board, 2021). This discrepancy has implications for the training of teachers in culturally responsive approaches and the overall educational experiences for students who can hardly find teachers who share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Educators face a growing need to ensure a safe, positive environment that promotes learning experiences for all students. An equity framework for culturally responsive literacy instruction emphasizes the need for educators to advance the five elements of teaching and learning (i.e., skills, intellect, criticality, identity, and joy) in tandem (Muhammad, 2020). Developing skills has long been a primary focus for assessment in many literacy curricula and has been vastly studied in the field of teaching whereas much less emphasis has been placed upon

the other four elements of the equity framework. Research has yielded support for the effectiveness of CRT or SEL in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. For example, Byrd (2016) analyzed the responses of 315 ethnically diverse adolescents and found culturally relevant teaching was positively correlated with students' academic outcomes and ethnic-racial identity development. Thus, when students see their culture and identity reflected in the curriculum, they are more engaged in their learning. Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 school-based K-12 SEL programs and found students gained significant improvement (i.e., an 11% gain) in academic performance, social-emotional skills, and behavior. Although there is evidence supporting the effectiveness of these approaches, more research is needed to better understand how teachers, especially teachers who are working with a diverse student population, are applying CRT or SEL practices in daily classroom instruction.

Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) and Swanson et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of equipping preservice teachers with a comprehensive model of CRT and SEL practices that can enable teachers to design instructional methods that prioritize not only academic content but also social-emotional competencies and cultural awareness. With an increasing interest in the potential of combining CRT and SEL frameworks to promote equitable and holistic education, there remains a need for more concrete and practical guidance on how educators, especially for multilingual teachers, effectively implement these frameworks into classroom instruction to support learners from various cultural backgrounds, leaving a gap in the research.

Additionally, there may be unique challenges and opportunities associated with integrating CRT and SEL in classrooms. For instance, both CRT and SEL research has

lacked sufficient emphasis on the implications of cultural mismatch between teachers and students and the knowledge gaps that teachers of color face in teacher education programs (Lau & Shea, 2022). The underrepresentation of teachers of color is not the only issue in teacher preparation programs. Prior studies have shown that preservice teachers are not adequately trained in CRT practices. Among the studies, Siwatu et al. (2016) found current coursework and field experiences do not provide sufficient opportunities for developing such practices. To address this issue, researchers (e.g., Henrikson & Lau, 2022) have suggested that teacher educators could incorporate observation tools and instructional videos that reflect the diversity of teachers and review the CRT practices in teacher preparation programs. Immigrant teachers and teachers who come from historically marginalized communities, especially those who were raised in Asian American cultures, are underrepresented in literacy research conducted in the United States. These teachers, with their own learning stories as multilingual students, may play a critical role in advancing approaches for integrating culturally responsive practices in classroom settings. Their voices are invaluable to the much-needed diversity of thoughts and teaching practices in educational systems to drive innovation and promote equity in literacy instruction. More studies are needed to understand teachers' beliefs about CRT and SEL and tap into in-service teachers' insights to collaboratively develop effective strategies for supporting learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Purpose of the Study

Literacy instruction integrated with culturally responsive practices and SEL is deemed to provide teachers with a platform to engage students in expressing authentic

feelings, developing healthy identities, and acquiring diverse perspectives through connections with diverse literature and worldviews (Lau & Shea, 2022). Studies on the implications of integrating SEL and CRT as a pedagogical approach in teaching literacy skills have remained scarce (Pentón Herrera, 2020). Critics of SEL programs are concerned that SEL skills that are taught based on fixed assumptions of emotions (e.g., negative emotions are all bad and growth mindset means making kids feel good) may reinforce bias rooted in White dominant culture and ignore individual differences. Like SEL research, most CRT studies have been grounded in theoretical frameworks and standards that are rarely supported by empirical findings or actual classroom practices by teachers of color. It is less known how teachers navigate SEL and CRT in their literacy instruction to help students from diverse cultural backgrounds truly embrace and leverage their lived and learning experiences.

The purpose of the two studies I conducted (see Chapter 3) was twofold. I sought to add knowledge to the existing literature related to SEL and CRT practices in K–12 classroom settings in the context of literacy instruction. I also sought to analyze the praxis of CRT approaches used by Asian immigrant teachers who were navigating the transition between different educational systems, with a focus on understanding how they adapt their CRT practices and incorporate their own cultural perspectives in classroom teaching.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter first discusses the foundational literature leading to culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and its relevance to practices in literacy instruction. Then, I provide an overview of social-emotional learning (SEL) studies and how SEL practices have been integrated in literacy classrooms, followed by a critical analysis of how CRT and SEL can be integrated to promote literacy development among linguistically diverse learners. In addition, I discuss the perspectives of educators who have incorporated CRT and SEL into their practices, such as helping students access their cultural and linguistic resources in literacy classroom. Lastly, this chapter presents a synthesis of the literature and outlines how the studies in Chapter 3 contribute to the existing research.

CRT in U.S. Schools

As the U.S. educational environment becomes increasingly diverse, it is essential that educators develop cultural competence to meet the needs of students, including valuing the diversity of students' backgrounds and addressing the stereotypes and biases that can arise from overly simplified racial assumptions (Sue & Torino, 2005). CRT is a pedagogical approach that supports cultural diversity in U.S. classrooms and is grounded in the theoretical foundations of scholarly work related to multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy (e.g., Banks, 1989; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

In the 1970s, the notion of providing equitable education for students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds began to evolve in the United States (Gorski, 1999). Abrahams and Troike (1972) proposed that teachers should acquire the ability to identify the linguistic and cultural distinctions of their students as a means of effectively teaching them. Among an expanding literature about culturally and linguistically diverse students

during the last quarter of the 20th century, many of the studies (e.g., Kaufman & Owings, 1992) associated this population with terms such as *at risk*, *disadvantaged*, *minority groups*, and *culturally deprived*.

In the 1980s and onwards, Banks (1989, 1995) proposed and developed the concept of multicultural education to encourage the appreciation of cultural diversity and the reflection of diverse cultures and groups in the classroom. The foundation of this approach lies in recognizing that students from diverse cultural backgrounds have different ways of learning. According to Banks, multicultural education encompasses five critical dimensions that function together to create an inclusive environment for all students. The first dimension is content integration, which involves incorporating diverse perspectives and histories into the curriculum and broadening the range of content covered in the classroom, so students are exposed to diverse cultures and ways of knowing. The second dimension is knowledge construction, which highlights the importance of recognizing that knowledge is not fixed but rather constructed by people in various cultural and historical contexts. Teachers should seek to engage students in constructing knowledge and encourage critical thinking and reflection. The third dimension is equity pedagogy, which involves adopting teaching methods that are responsive to diverse learning needs and styles. One of the examples is to facilitate cooperative learning activities where students with diverse skills share opportunities to participate and learn to support each other to achieve goals. The fourth dimension is prejudice reduction, which involves challenging and addressing biases and stereotypes in the classroom or society at large. Finally, the fifth dimension is empowering school culture and social structure, which involves building relationships with families and

encouraging students to participate in their own learning and in the larger community. All these dimensions affirm culturally based differences in learning and advocate for cultural diversity in curriculum (Banks, 1989; Banks 1995).

The overarching aim of multicultural education is to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that honors the diversity of cultural backgrounds of all students (Banks, 1995). Some scholars (e.g., Ladson-Billings) have suggested a more specific pedagogical approach that goes beyond recognizing cultural differences to actively empowering students through their cultural identities and experiences. In the early 1990s, Ladson-Billings (1995a) introduced culturally relevant pedagogy, which is a theoretical framework aimed at upholding cultural identity and equitable learning opportunities. This framework is composed of three broad propositions, each addressing a critical aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy. The first proposition emphasizes the importance of shaping students' self-conceptions and perceptions of others in ways that value their cultural identities and assets. This strengths-based approach involves recognizing and building on students' prior knowledge, experiences, and skills to help them succeed academically and personally. The second proposition refers to the role of social relationships in creating a culturally responsive learning environment. A positive teacher–student relationship is built on mutual respect, trust, and care. Teachers should seek to establish a supportive and understanding environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging in collaborative learning. The third proposition focuses on the conception of knowledge and the ways teachers select curriculum content and conduct assessments. Teachers could acknowledge that cultural backgrounds influence how students learn and that culturally relevant content and

assessments can better connect students with the learning material and help them see its relevance to their lives. Overall, this framework has been influential in formulating CRT practices and ongoing research that intends to meet the evolving needs of diverse student populations (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Although culturally relevant pedagogy and CRT have similar concepts, culturally relevant pedagogy has a stronger focus on the development of critical consciousness and sociopolitical awareness to empower both teachers and students to become agents of social change and transformation and to use their cultural knowledge and experiences to navigate systems of power and privilege (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). On the other hand, CRT is a more specific teaching approach centered on improving students' academic achievement and promoting their cultural competence (Gay, 2002). CRT emphasizes the importance of using students' cultural backgrounds and experiences to inform teaching practices and create a more engaging and relevant learning experience.

Gay (2002) described the five essential elements of CRT. Element 1 is developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity and encourages educators to establish a deep understanding of the cultures represented in their teaching environment. This knowledge includes an understanding of how cultural practices, values, and beliefs impact learning. Element 2 is including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, which highlights the importance of incorporating different perspectives into the curriculum to provide students with a more accurate representation of the cultures and communities around them. Element 3 is demonstrating caring and building learning communities, which emphasizes the need for educators to create a welcoming environment that values students' diverse backgrounds. Element 4 is communicating with ethnically diverse

students and sheds light on effective communication that validates and recognizes the experiences of students from different ethnic groups. Element 5, responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction, is focused on adapting teaching strategies to meet students' diverse learning needs. Overall, Gay's CRT framework stresses a strengths-based approach to teaching that embraces students' cultural and linguistic assets.

2000s and Beyond

Leveraging the cultural knowledge and linguistic assets of students from diverse backgrounds is a key aspect of CRT that can make learning more pertinent and productive (Au, 2009). CRT has had a noteworthy influence in promoting instructional strategies for helping Black students engage in learning. Some scholars have also catered to students with other racial backgrounds (Hammond, 2015). In addition, Gay (2018) argued how discussions around cultural diversity should not be limited to students from ethnic minority groups; further, CRT is not a corrective teaching method aiming to rectify problematic behaviors among culturally and linguistically diverse students.

To further explain the meaning of responsiveness related to CRT, Stemberge (2020) specified responsiveness entails a redefinition of the purpose of learning for students, which leads to greater clarity and more directed approach toward achieving authentic engagement. Thus, CRT creates a classroom environment that is inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of students and encourages active participation in learning that entails their perspectives. The culturally responsive approach marks a shift from a one-size-fits-all point of view toward a more student-centered way that teachers can use to engage students in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity through their learning.

As a continued evolution from CRT, some scholars have expanded on the principles of CRT and developed various approaches and terms to frame the asset-based pedagogies, which prioritize the development of strengths and background knowledge of students. One of these approaches is a framework for a culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010), which ties the concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy to school curriculum and teachers' practices that encourages critical conversations such as racism and classism in support of marginalized students. Another addition to CRT literature is culturally sustaining pedagogy, coined by Paris (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy is an alternative to culturally relevant/responsive teaching and emphasizes the importance of fostering and sustaining students' linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. Teachers who practice culturally sustaining pedagogy set explicit goals to create a pluralistic learning environment that sustains students' cultural and linguistic assets. Culturally sustaining pedagogy extends the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy to support students in upholding their cultural and linguistic identities while providing equitable learning opportunities.

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of CRT

Although U.S. schools are becoming more attentive to a multicultural world, stereotypes and race-based biases stemming from overly simplified racial classifications persist (Starck et al., 2020). For instance, many teachers assume Asian or Asian American students are industrious and conformist and overlook their within-group heterogeneities, including vastly different sociolinguistic and religious histories and backgrounds (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). Howard (2020) noted educators must be willing

to see how race and racialization shape young peoples' understandings of themselves and the world around them. Students require a safe space to foster their racial awareness, enabling them to identify and address their unconscious biases and gain a deeper understanding of how the racial and cultural contexts shape the experiences, identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals from diverse backgrounds. These contexts include factors such as language, history, values, traditions, and religion.

Despite its promise to promote a more culturally inclusive learning experience, culturally responsive pedagogy has prompted political debates in the United States due to xenophobia, clashes with standards-based education reform, and misunderstandings of CRT practices (Sleeter, 2012). Some politicians (e.g., Florida Governor Ron DeSantis) conflate that discussing race and issues of systemic inequality in the classroom is to force racial and political content onto students (Izaguirre, 2023). Sleeter (2012) indicated that culturally responsive pedagogy is often simplified or distorted in four ways, namely "1) cultural celebration, 2) trivialization, 3) essentializing culture, and 4) substituting cultural for political analysis of inequalities" (p. 568). These four simplifications can mask the real purpose of CRT, which is to enhance students' academic learning and retention grounded in their cultural and linguistic repertoires. Cultural celebration refers to the tendency to focus on culture but ignore the link between culture and academic learning. Trivialization points to reducing CRT to a couple of steps rather than considering it as a paradigm shift in teaching practices. Essentializing culture involves making fixed assumptions and homogeneous conception of cultures and racial groups. Substituting cultural for political analysis means cultural analysis itself will solve problems derived from systemic inequity, racism, and other forms of oppression. Given that CRT is densely

embedded with conceptual ideas and often easily interpreted with different meanings, it is necessary to explore educators' perceptions and knowledge about CRT to better navigate the related practices in schools and examine what CRT practices strongly impact students' learning.

Research has shown that teachers' beliefs, experiences in teacher education programs, and attitudes toward teaching students from diverse grounds all play a vital role in the successful implementation of CRT practices (Bonner et al., 2017; López, 2016; Milner, 2009). One area of focus in CRT research is teachers' self-efficacy. A culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy scale found preservice and in-service teachers may not attempt to resolve classroom conflicts, understand the cultural context, and discipline students' behaviors in ways that respond to students' cultural backgrounds (Siwatu et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers may struggle to implement CRT practices to support students' defiant behaviors, which can lead to a reliance on authority and power to manage the classroom rather than building trusting relationships with students.

Another challenge in implementing CRT practices is the marginalization of the voices of teachers of color in teacher preparation programs. Researchers have highlighted the lack of recognition for teachers' own cultural experiences in these programs (Aronson & Meyers, 2022; Brown, 2014). Aronson and Meyers (2022) argued diversity and multiculturalism courses in teacher preparation programs are often designed for White preservice teachers, leaving many teachers of color finding themselves disconnected from their realities in the coursework. For example, the class discussions only reflect a White

perspective with minimal cross-cultural awareness that makes preservice teachers of color feel their experiences are ignored or marginalized.

Besides a limited sense of self-efficacy and an underrepresentation of diverse teachers' voices in teacher education, researchers (Grayson, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Scott & Purdum-Cassidy, 2016) have also identified barriers in teachers' actual applications of CRT in their classrooms, such as not knowing how to link students' learning and instructional goals through the lens of CRT, lacking intentional curriculum designs that promote cultural and linguistic diversity, and not having sufficient pedagogical resources or professional training to teach in culturally responsive ways. Several studies have highlighted the challenges in creating culturally responsive educational environments. For instance, in a longitudinal study, Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) found new teachers of color encountered challenges of teaching students in culturally responsive ways despite facing the pressure to meet school expectations (e.g., standardized testing, curriculum standards, and instructional timeframes). Borrero et al. (2016) found new teachers of color struggled to revise existing curriculum to be more culturally relevant due to time constraints and assessment requirements. Siwatu et al. (2016) revealed both White and Hispanic preservice teacher participants had doubts implementing CRT because they lacked knowledge base regarding student diversity and experiences observing culturally responsive practices in educational settings. Matias (2013) suggested it is insufficient to merely instruct White teachers on how to be culturally responsive and sensitive. Rather, it is essential to have White teachers engage in critical self-exploration and self-reflection of their own beliefs and attitudes toward issues related to race, power, and privilege. In sum, these studies highlighted the

ubiquitous challenges faced by both preservice and in-service teachers in the education system that may conflict with their commitment to and practice of CRT. The findings also underscored the importance of providing and sustaining system-wide instructional and infrastructure support for teachers to achieve a truly equitable learning environment.

Although the studies discussed in the previous paragraph have evidenced the challenges that teachers face in implementing CRT practices, there is still much that is not fully explored, particularly regarding immigrant teachers. Immigrant teachers in K–12 education may face unique challenges when it comes to navigating unfamiliar teaching curriculum and student populations while trying to implement CRT principles in their classrooms (Borrero et al., 2016). For example, immigrant teachers may have struggles to understand the expectations of the new educational system, which can impact their ability to apply CRT.

CRT in Literacy Instruction

The overarching goal of CRT is to help learners develop higher-order reasoning that engages them in solving problems through logic and mapping abstract concepts so learners from diverse backgrounds are empowered with practical habits of critical thinking to process newly acquired knowledge and become more self-directed to communicate with others. In their conceptualization of culturally sustaining/reviving pedagogy, McCarty and Lee (2014) wrote that embracing multilingualism, multiculturalism, and communality in education systems are a powerful means of promoting self-determination among students. Embracing multilingualism means valuing the linguistic diversity of students and creating opportunities for them to use and develop their languages in the classroom. By doing so, educators can help students develop a

stronger sense of identity and expand their cultural heritage, which promotes self-determination. Multiculturalism emphasizes the recognition and appreciation of diverse perspectives and cultural traditions; by incorporating cultural exchange and dialogue into curriculum and instruction, students can learn from a more inclusive viewpoint about their own and others' backgrounds. Community refers to the idea of fostering a sense of community in the classroom and emphasizing the importance of cooperation, which helps students enhance a sense of belonging and connection to their peers and their community through working together and supporting one another in their learning process.

More can be done in the literacy classroom to offer a pluralistic experience that intersects with students' own identities and ways of being in the community, inside and outside of the four walls of the classroom. Bui and Fagan's (2013) study on the integrated reading comprehension strategy supported the idea that integration of practices such as story grammar instruction and story maps with CRT helps connect the learning environment with students' individual experiences. These research-based strategies validate students' experiences and build home-school connections and a sense of community that may improve students' learning attitudes. Such implementation is particularly beneficial for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Additionally, multicultural materials used in instruction acknowledge students' cultural heritages and help them connect home and school experiences (Blair, 2003). A case study on the reading performance of Black second-grade students showed culturally relevant content that affirms images of—and/or include experiences and aspects of—Black values and cultures facilitated student participants' oral reading fluency because their reading

was supported by their similar experiences with family members and friends and their background knowledge (Cartledge et al., 2015).

History and Conception of SEL

In the early 20th century, theorists such as Vygotsky (2011) and Piaget (1964) shared the sociocultural perspectives of children's cognitive development, which broadly influenced research trends in education, leading to a greater emphasis on how social and cultural contexts might affect student learning. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory highlights the critical role of social interaction (e.g., collaborative dialogue and cooperative task) and scaffolding in helping children develop cognitive and psychosocial skills. Piaget's stages of cognitive development recognize that students' moral, social, and emotional development is closely tied to their cognitive development across age stages. Other theories, such as Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, suggest learning is a socialized process that engages dynamic interactions. The social cognitive theory emphasizes that people learn not only through their own direct experiences but also through interacting with others and observing the consequences of their behaviors. Bandura's theory suggests that social-emotional and academic learning is not solely an individual process; rather, it is influenced by the social environment. This social environment includes the people students interact with, the feedback and support they receive, and the social norms and cultural beliefs that shape their behavior.

Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) also has significant implications for implementing the integration of SEL in academic learning. The theory describes that a range of ecological systems can influence a child's behaviors and social-emotional development. These systems are multileveled, involving the microsystem (i.e.,

immediate family, peers and friends, and school environment), mesosystem (i.e., interactions between the groups in the microsystem), exosystem (i.e., extended family and neighbors and community groups), macrosystem (i.e., attitudes and ideologies of the culture), and the chronosystem (i.e., environmental changes and major life transitions). By understanding how these different levels of systems impact students' development, educators can consider factors in the multiple systems to provide positive learning experiences for their students.

The promotion of holistic development and the empowerment of students to become effective learners have been approached from various perspectives in educational research. Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences posits that everyone has a unique intelligence profile. Gardner identified the multiple intelligences as naturalist, musical, logical-mathematical, existential, interpersonal, bodily kinesthetic, linguistic, intra-personal, and spatial intelligences. Goleman (1995) later developed the concept of emotional intelligence and constructed five key components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These components enable people to guide their thinking, decision making, and relationship building.

In addition, Freire's (2021) work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in the late 1970s, popularized the concept of ethical and moral education that aims to foster students' problem-solving capacities and awareness of world issues such as power structures and systemic oppressions to navigate complex social situations. Starting from the 1990s, a growing body of interdisciplinary research has constructed brain-based learning theories that align with SEL to guide instructional strategies (Immordino-Yang et al., 2018; Sprenger, 2020). These theories combine findings from neuroscience,

psychology, and educational research to understand how the brain is wired to learn and how to promote a positive, effective learning environment. The principles of brain-based learning suggest fostering SEL skills, such as emotional regulation and cultivating positive relationships, is essential for optimizing learning outcomes and cognitive growth.

Theoretical Frameworks of SEL

Termed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in the early 1990s, SEL in education can be understood as a methodology that helps learners, both children and adults, develop core social–emotional competencies, including self-awareness (i.e., ability to recognize their emotions and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses), self-management (i.e., ability to self-control thoughts, emotions, and actions along with goal setting), social awareness (i.e., ability to show empathy toward people from different backgrounds and cultures in diverse situations), relationship skills (i.e., ability to establish and maintain positive interactions with people, communicate with others, and resolve conflict) and making responsible decisions (i.e., ability to make caring choices, evaluate impacts of actions, and demonstrate critical thinking skills). These five core social–emotional competencies are described in the CASEL-5 framework (CASEL, 2020) and widely used and adopted in U.S. schools, districts, and states to promote SEL.

Besides CASEL, the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched the whole school, whole community, whole child model in 2014 to promote collaborative policy making and school practices that improve students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being (ASCD, 2014). According to ASCD (2015), the following five

tenets make up the WSCC model: (a) each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle; (b) each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults; (c) each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community; (d) each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults; and (e) each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment. These tenets are crucial for promoting the social–emotional development of students and enhancing learning in school. When students are healthy, both physically and mentally, they are more likely to be motivated in learning. By learning about and practicing a healthy lifestyle, such as stress management and proper nutrition, students develop a better self-image and self-esteem. Students who feel safe and supported are more likely to be able to focus on developing and building positive relationships with peers and adults. When students are actively engaged in learning and feel connected to their school and community, they are more likely to develop empathy, communication skills, and a sense of social responsibility. Personalized learning and support provided by qualified and caring adults can provide guidance to students, helping them develop trusting relationships and skills necessary for success, both academically and socially. Lastly, when students are challenged academically, they are more likely to develop a sense of purpose and achievement, which is important for achieving their goals. By developing a growth mindset, students can build self-confidence and self-efficacy, which are important for their further study and career.

To foster students' holistic development in diverse classrooms, the Center for Research and Teaching the Whole Child proposed an anchor competencies framework (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020) that involves the following seven anchor competencies:

1. Build trusting relationships, which refers to the ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with peers, teachers, and other members of the school community. It includes skills such as active listening and effective communication.
2. Foster self-reflection, which emphasizes the skills such as self-evaluation and goal setting that help students reflect on their own learning and personal growth.
3. Foster a growth mindset, which focuses on cultivating a belief that abilities and intelligence can be grown through resilience and a willingness to overcome challenges.
4. Cultivate perseverance, which emphasizes the competency to persist and persevere in the face of setbacks.
5. Create community, which refers to developing skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of shared responsibility.
6. Promote collaborative learning, which is the idea that communication, cooperation, and teamwork are involved in active learning.
7. Respond constructively across differences, which emphasizes the importance of respecting differences and communicating effectively across diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Although the five tenets listed by ASCD (2015) and the anchor competencies framework (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020) focus on creating a whole-child approach to school policies, Frey et al.'s (2019) integrated SEL framework is specifically designed to help teachers incorporate SEL skills into academic content. The tenets in their framework are (a) identity and agency, (b) emotional regulation, (c) public spirit, (d) social skills, and (e) cognitive regulation. These frameworks suggest all students need access to SEL as a part of their education and human development.

SEL Programs and Interventions in Schools

Since the late 20th century, U.S. schools have started adapting more evidence based SEL programs and curricula to support academic learning. For example, RULER feeling words curriculum provides SEL-infused lessons to help students process and express feelings and achieve literacy learning goals (Maurer & Brackett, 2004). RULER skills include recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotion. Schonfeld et al. (2015) examined the effectiveness of the promoting alternative thinking strategies (PATHS) curriculum in elementary schools with predominantly Black and Hispanic/Latinx students. The PATHS intervention groups focused on four SEL areas including (a) emotional awareness and understanding, (b) self-control, (c) interpersonal problem-solving skills, and (d) developing peer relations. Students who participated in PATHS showed progress in all three academic content areas (i.e., reading, writing, and math).

Since the early 2000s, SEL practices have gained prominence among K–12 schools in the United States (Elias, 2003; Hoffman, 2009; Zins et al., 2007). Because SEL practices are increasingly integrated throughout schools and partnerships with

families and communities, more states across the nation are now developing guidance for SEL implementation (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). As of 2023, every state in the country has established SEL competencies for early childhood/preK. Additionally, 44 states have offered state-specific guidance to support the implementation of SEL, and the number represented a significant increase (i.e., 70%) when compared to the data in 2020, according to CASEL's social and emotional learning state scorecard scan (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). Further, 27 states have adopted policies for promoting SEL competencies and/or standards since Illinois became the first state to put SEL standards into practice in 2011 (CASEL, 2022). Still, most states have yet to expand the outline of SEL benchmarks beyond early childhood. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2021), less than one third of all states have developed standards and/or guidelines for SEL development across the K–12 spectrum.

Along with the implementation of state standards, more schools have introduced stand-alone SEL programs and interventions to address students' social–emotional needs (Weissberg, 2019). In general, developing students' cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and interpersonal skills are the main components of SEL instruction. For example, PATHS curriculum is used to teach preK through fifth-grade students SEL skills specific to their grade levels, such as self-management and empathy. Empirical studies have found that PATHS is beneficial for younger students' emotional knowledge, social competence, and even academic achievement (Averdijk et al., 2016; Greenberg et al., 2004). Another example of SEL programs is the positive action curriculum, which includes lessons focusing on various SEL aspects, such as self-concept, social interactions, and self-improvement, for students from preK to 12th grade. Longitudinal

randomized controlled trials (Bavarian et al., 2013; Beets et al., 2009) showed curriculum produced positive effects on students' reading and behaviors in elementary and middle schools. The Second Step program, developed by Committee for Children, offers stand-alone SEL units for early childhood, elementary, and middle school classrooms, and the elementary-level program offers learning themes such as empathy, anger management, skills for learning, problem-solving steps, and fair ways to play. In the review of Second Step studies, Frey et al. (2000) concluded the program has an effective impact on reducing physical aggression and increasing students' sociable interactions, but the researchers also emphasized that sufficient time, school-wide support, and ongoing training of staff are critical variables.

Several meta-analyses have demonstrated the long-term effects of SEL programs for school-aged students from kindergarten through high school in North America and other parts of the world. For example, Sklad et al. (2012) analyzed 75 published studies about social, emotional, and behavioral-based programs from 1995 to 2008 and reported these programs yielded beneficial effects on academic achievement, reduction or prevention of antisocial behavior, increased self-image, enhanced social-emotional skills, and positive attitudes toward self. Taylor et al. (2017) found 82 school-based SEL interventions, including 38 interventions outside the United States, delivered long-term positive outcomes including better social-emotional skills, attitudes, and social behaviors and greater academic success when compared to peers without participating in SEL programs. Corcoran et al. (2018) examined the association between preK-12 school-based SEL interventions and students' academic achievements in core subjects including reading, mathematics, and science between 1970 and 2016, and the researchers concluded

the findings were consistent with prior SEL reviews that stated SEL had a positive effect on academic achievement. Among these studies, researchers recommended future SEL interventions should specifically assess whether students from diverse racial and ethnic groups fared differently in the SEL programs (Taylor et al., 2017) and more large-scale randomized studies are needed to confirm the earlier findings about the effectiveness of SEL programs (Corcoran et al., 2018).

Educators' Beliefs Toward SEL

Administrators, teaching staff, and school professionals such as counselors, psychologists, healthcare specialists, and therapists contribute significantly to supporting the social–emotional well-being of students. Jackson (2018) revealed teachers had a significant effect on high school students' non-test-score behaviors such as absences, dropouts, and suspensions, although the effect was not well-captured by standardized tests. Researchers who conducted studies for rural school systems suggested promising collaborative practices to address students' social–emotional needs (Nichols et al., 2017). For example, classroom teachers should receive educator training on mental health. Because students have diverse needs, SEL programs should be implemented in conjunction with positive behavioral interventions using a multitiered system of support (MTSS) framework, which divides instructional and behavioral supports into levels based on students' needs.

Under the MTSS (Sailor et al., 2020), SEL instruction can be taught as part of the general education to all children at the Tier I (i.e., universal support) level. Students who need more intensive interventions may have personalized SEL support at the Tier II (i.e., additional or supplemental support)/III (i.e., intensified support) levels that involve

specialists such as special education teachers, social workers, school counselors, or school psychologists. To support the successful implementation of schoolwide SEL support systems and policies in school, it is required to engage a variety of stakeholders (e.g., administrators, educators with different professional positions and disciplines, and members of communities), which may help reduce the tensions arising from changes in the school system. For example, teachers may feel overwhelmed by the expectations and scrutiny of delivering the SEL curriculum. Teachers may “seem more responsive to influences from within their buildings, including leadership and directives provided by principals and input from peer teachers” (Meyers et al., 2015, p. 122). For systemic SEL to occur, proactive measures (e.g., investing in leadership support and empowering teachers and staff to exercise more flexibility in incorporating SEL into their school practices) are necessary.

Few studies have explored how schools disseminate SEL programs in a tiered response model and how specialized professionals (e.g., school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists) collaborate with building administrators and teachers to provide SEL support. Further investigation is needed to collect data on how different professional groups use their expertise to deliver SEL support in a tiered support system. Maras et al. (2015) studied interdisciplinary collaboration for SEL services and revealed challenges faced by educators in making SEL instruction consistent and sustainable in schools. These challenges include limited resources on existing practices in schools, the lack of quality SEL screening assessment tools, and little external consultation regarding the SEL curricula. Despite the abundance of educational research on SEL interventions

and curricula, little guidance has been provided to help school educators collaborate on SEL screening, instruction, and assessment.

To understand the impacts of SEL programs in school settings, McCormick et al. (2015) conducted an empirical study to examine whether the dimensions of school climate—such as leadership (i.e., instructional support and trusting relationship between school leaders and staff), accountability (i.e., teachers’ perspectives of high academic performance for the students), and safety/respect (i.e., teachers’ feeling about physical and emotional safety provided by their school for students and other staff)—impacted the implementation of the 10-week SEL program called INSIGHT into Children’s Temperament in 22 public elementary schools in New York City. Specifically, the researchers found students exhibiting a lower level in task persistence and higher level in disruptive behaviors were more likely to benefit from an appropriate SEL intervention. The study also highlights the significant influence of school climate on student learning and achievement. Nevertheless, more research is necessary to explore how to improve the school climate and provide appropriate SEL support.

The importance of SEL has gained recognition in education (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2004). Stakeholders continue to call for more culturally responsive SEL frameworks and relevant training for teachers. An increasing number of studies have shown evidence that social–emotional skills should be taught in an integrative manner with the support of schools, families, and communities (Jagers et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020). A nationwide report showed that half of the U.S. states have issued or been in a process of formulating guidelines and standards of SEL instruction at grade levels, whereas numerous U.S. schools have implemented universal SEL programs (CASEL,

2018), which are designed for all students regardless of their backgrounds. However, research has revealed concerns regarding the impact of SEL assessment and interventions on CLD students. An Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction report (Johnson et al., 2019) revealed the key findings of the statewide survey of a school district, interviews, and focus groups. About one third of focus group participants in the report responded that the widely adopted SEL language and frameworks are not yet culturally relevant with diverse communities. Some people questioned whether the SEL programs and assessments could appropriately reflect and leverage English language learner (ELL) students' prior knowledge and cultural assets. The report also emphasized the need for more professional development and guidance across the state so educators can have more consistent practices and access to SEL resources.

In the pursuit of educational equity, it is imperative that more research be conducted to ensure SEL programs in U.S. schools are culturally responsive. As educators strive to address the topic of inclusive and equitable practices, it is essential that ongoing research examines how SEL skills are designed and taught in different settings and contexts that influence students' social-emotional development and academic performance.

Integrating SEL in Literacy Instruction

Literacy instruction integrated with SEL skills provides teachers with a platform to engage students in expressing authentic feelings, developing healthy identities, and acquiring diverse perspectives through connections with diverse literature and worldviews (Lau & Shea, 2022). In this sense, SEL competencies have a significant overlap with the Common Core State Standards for English language arts. Specifically,

skills such as comparing and contrasting characters and describing their traits, motivations, and feelings are outlined in the Common Core State Standards for English language arts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) and are associated with students' SEL competencies in social awareness and relationship management. Because SEL programs in U.S. schools are largely rooted in Western cultures, teachers in diverse classrooms may need to identify the core constructs of SEL skills and be aware of cultural references to foster diverse learners' social and emotional development.

More research is necessary to validate the effectiveness and quality of culturally responsive SEL implementation (Humphrey, 2013). It is especially important to examine the outcomes of SEL for students who are underrepresented due to their backgrounds, such as those based on race, ethnicity, sociocultural status, and sexual orientation. Hoffman (2009) argued SEL programs should acknowledge emotional expressions in non-Western cultural contexts because students' emotional regulation and responses are highly impacted by their cultural backgrounds. Still, researchers have questioned the responsiveness of SEL programs to students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Humphrey, 2013; Jagers et al., 2019). More studies have advocated that SEL practices should go beyond an emphasis on individual-level skills building. In K–12 settings, Cramer and Castro-Olivo (2016) designed the stand-alone strong teens curriculum, which invited high school students to consider their own cultural heritage (e.g., language, values) when setting personal and academic goals, and applying SEL skills in their daily lives. In collaboration with district partners, CASEL documented how SEL can be a lever for supporting an equitable learning environment where all students have access to quality educational resources and feel respected and engaged (Schlund et

al., 2020). The recommended approaches called for elevating students' cultural assets and increasing opportunities for students to share their voices in topics such as SEL and school challenges.

Although SEL has been widely recognized as an effective tool to support students' well-being and academic success and there is a growing interest in promoting culturally responsive SEL practices, there remains a lack of research and practical resources on how to integrate culturally responsive social-emotional teaching in literacy classrooms. Studies have raised concerns about the consistency and relevance of evidence based SEL programs in different school contexts (Lawson et al., 2019). Unlike other content areas, SEL has been taught as a supplemental program or an after-school intervention. SEL skills that foster students in the development of ethics and conduct, positive attitudes, empathy, and resilience are largely neglected in standard-based and assessment-driven academic lessons.

In reviewing preK-5 SEL programs, Ramirez et al. (2021) pointed out many SEL programs touch upon the topics of diversity and inclusion, although they often frame diversity as acceptance of differences rather than explicitly discussing diversity as an asset. Further, few programs specifically discuss cultural diversity, focusing instead on surface-level differences such as individual likes and dislikes. To make SEL more sustainable and relatable to diverse students, curricula and classroom pedagogies should focus on strengthening the connections between SEL competencies and students' linguistic and cultural assets because such practices provide students with opportunities to develop their sociocultural identities and empower students to explore different ways of self-care and self-regulation.

More researchers have launched studies on evaluating SEL frameworks for culturally and linguistically diverse students. For instance, Kennedy (2019) reviewed that most SEL curricula are not designed through a culturally sustaining lens for diverse learners, and school leadership interactions may impact the effectiveness of SEL implementation. Their work on an equity-focused framework for school leadership called for acknowledging the diversity of students in SEL programming. Their work, together with other SEL research findings (e.g., Osher et al., 2016), indicated a pressing need for reprioritizing the implementation of SEL reforms. Rather than subscribing to “color-blind methodologies,” school leadership should employ a “color-conscious” (Kennedy, 2019, p. 479) approach to consider the assets that students and teachers bring to the SEL programs. Jagers et al. (2019) emphasized that SEL practices need to be transformative; that is, educators should attend to affirming unique strengths of students from diverse backgrounds to combat structural inequities, collaborate with others in community building, and develop collaborative skills to solve problems. For example, educators can create active colearning opportunities through collaborative problem solving in group-based class activities. By recognizing and building on the strengths and identities of students from diverse backgrounds, SEL practices can help build a more equitable educational system. With this idea in mind, culturally responsive SEL requires far more evidence-based studies and research on its pedagogical frameworks and curricular designs. There is no sufficient evidence supporting that enough professionals are knowledgeable in the field of education to offer expertise and professional development training that facilitate high-quality SEL instruction for diverse students (Elias, 2019).

Summary of Literature

The overview of literature in Chapter 2 summarized the research regarding the effectiveness of CRT practices and SEL programs, plus educators' perceptions of both CRT and SEL. Findings from quantitative and qualitative studies suggested that educators who critically engage CRT and SEL principles in their classrooms tend to have seen the benefits to optimize engagement and facilitate learning for students from diverse backgrounds. Although many studies have investigated the effect of CRT strategies and SEL on students' academic outcomes and classroom engagement in general, fewer studies have considered the cultural and social–emotional aspects of literacy instruction for English learners (ELs), or the specific integration of CRT and SEL practices in everyday curriculum or teaching. Furthermore, there remains an underrepresentation of voices from teachers of color or teachers of immigration, who themselves may possess a unique perspective on culturally relevant literacy instruction and/or social–emotional teaching.

With this vision, I outlined the practices and relevant research findings, which are grounded in the fields of CRT and SEL. Both fields shed light on building students' cultural and social references in aspects of learning. When looking at the current policies and nation-wide standardized assessments and literacy curriculum that focus predominantly on academic skills and drills, teachers should play a key role in filling the knowledge gap between curricular standards and holistic development of students.

The two studies in Chapter 3 intended to fill the current gaps in literature. The first study (Lau & Gritter, 2022) urges for CRT literature expansions on instructional and cross-cultural experiences of language teachers of color. The second study (Lau & Shea,

2022) proposes a pedagogical approach for classroom teachers to integrate SEL with literacy instruction for ELs. Both studies highlight the important role of teachers in promoting culturally and linguistically inclusive classrooms, and how to leverage culturally responsive pedagogies or SEL practices for systemic improvement.

Chapter 3: Specific Content of Journal Manuscripts

In the first article, *Hidden Voices: How Chinese Immigrant Educators Implement Culturally Inclusive Practices in U.S. Classrooms* (Lau & Gritter, 2022),¹ my coauthor and I explored how Chinese immigrant teachers' cross-national educational experiences determined their culturally inclusive practices in second language teaching. Findings of our multiple-case study indicated that although all teacher participants had extensive training in second language acquisition, they noted gaps in knowledge of American student culture. The participants also revealed that an ideal classroom was a place of cultural harmony where divergent views could be valued and shared. This study is designed to be an entry to understanding the instructional experiences of Chinese immigrant educators in the United States.

In the second article, *Empowering English learners in the classroom through culturally responsive social–emotional teaching practices* (Lau & Shea, 2022),² my coauthor and I proposed a new pedagogical approach called CULTURE, which incorporates culturally inclusive, social–emotional learning-centered classroom practices with to create a contextually meaningful and equitable classroom learning environment for English learners.

¹ Lau, W. S., & Gritter, K. (2022). Hidden voices: How Chinese immigrant educators implement culturally inclusive practices in U.S. classrooms. *New Waves*, 25(1), 65–81.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2709095289>

² Lau, W. S., & Shea, M. (2022). Empowering English learners in the classroom through culturally responsive social–emotional teaching practices. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2078337>

Hidden Voices: How Chinese Immigrant Educators Implement Culturally Inclusive Practices in U. S. Classrooms³

The U.S. educational system is facing a growing diversity of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Research reviews have evidenced substantial positive outcomes of culturally inclusive practices to promote students' academic outcomes and learning experiences in diverse classrooms (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Larson et al., 2020). A priority for educational research in the U.S. is to recognize intercultural knowledge and acknowledge professional experiences from teachers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in order to enrich culturally responsive teaching (CRT) for different student populations. While numerous CRT findings and related frameworks have centered on Hispanic and African American populations (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Gay, 2018; Pappamihel & Moreno, 2011), little has been known about the implementation of CRT practiced by Asian American teachers. A recent report on the U.S. Asian population (Budiman and Ruiz, 2021) projected that by 2055 Asian Americans would become the biggest immigrant group in the country. The Asian American community is incredibly differentiated in terms of cultures and languages. However, the bias of Asian homogeneity has neglected the multiplicity of Asian cultural and sociolinguistic experiences. Asian Americans are often viewed as marginalized groups, perpetual outsiders, or the invisible minority (Li & Nicholson, 2021). The longstanding impact of lacking the understanding of the Asian American experiences is evident in K-12 education policymaking as well as teacher education research as Asian

³ Lau, W. S., & Gritter, K. (2022). Hidden voices: How Chinese immigrant educators implement culturally inclusive practices in U.S. classrooms. *New Waves*, 25(1), 65–81. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2709095289>

Americans are usually framed as a monolithic group. Additionally, there have been limited culturally responsive resources that target the specific needs of the subpopulations of the Asian American communities (e.g., first-generation Asian immigrants). The misconceptions and overgeneralization of Asian American educational experiences (e.g., Asian American students are exceptionally high academic achievers and self-sufficient) have largely undermined the imminent needs of educational policy which should ensure that the multiple cultural heritages are sustained and the diversified linguistic and lived experiences of Asian American students are valued.

Over the years, a growing body of scholarship has studied how the internalization of the stereotypes such as model minority impacts Asian Americans' well-being and self-concept (Shih et al., 2019), yet not much has been discussed about how Asian American teachers could optimize their linguistic and cultural resources in classrooms to promote inclusive practices. These teachers' voices have long been hidden in racialized experiences and underrepresented in the predominantly White teaching force in American schooling. It is thus necessary to include more careful examinations of the CRT experiences and beliefs of Asian American teachers in order to demystify the homogeneity of Asian-American groups and dismantle stereotypes.

In our empirical study, we aim to expand the knowledge base of CRT practices through analyzing narratives of Chinese immigrant educators who were educated partially in China and partially in the U.S. Since there is a paucity of research on immigrant teachers' cultural expertise and professional practices in U.S. education (Adair et al., 2012), it is important to include immigrant teachers' funds of knowledge in the development of teaching materials, and this helps educators implement more effective

instructional activities for newcomers and students with immigrant experiences (Adair, 2011). Our teacher participants have cross-cultural competence and multiple educational backgrounds attributable to their lived experiences in China and the U.S. Given that their teaching identities are shaped by both Eastern and Western cultures and values, our primary goal is to document how they leverage their unique identities, language expertise, and transnational experiences to teach students from diverse backgrounds.

The study is guided by these four research questions:

1. How do Chinese immigrant teachers who received public education in China navigate CRT pedagogies promoted in U.S. teacher training programs?
2. How do they perceive the concept of CRT?
3. How does their pedagogical thinking facilitate student engagement in cultural topics?
4. What is their view about the outcomes of practicing CRT?

Theoretical Frameworks for Culturally Inclusive Practices in the Asian American Context

To put culturally responsive concepts into pedagogical practices, Hammond (2015) and other researchers (e.g., Milner, 2017) highlighted the impact of teacher learning and development in teacher education on implementing culturally inclusive teaching to meet students' needs because teachers' cultural knowledge and values significantly shape their practices to promote students' academic and social-emotional learning. In this regard, a focus of our study is how Asian immigrant teachers perceive their teacher training and professional development and how their beliefs about CRT inform their teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Our analysis is grounded in three theoretical aspects pertaining to culturally inclusive practices: (a) CRT, which is defined as “teachers using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performative styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2018, p. 31), (b) culturally relevant pedagogy, which “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20), and 3) culturally relevant education, which fights against the “focus on individualism, privatization, and competition embedded in neoliberal conceptions of education” (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 164). Culturally responsive educators not only teach academic skills and concepts but also offer the space and time for critical reflection to develop cultural competence across cultures, enabling students to take on discourses of power. CRT should result in preparing students to work together to transform society by naming practices that work against equity and enacting actions that bring about equity. The beliefs and values of the teachers should direct students how to make sense of the inequalities they experience so that social transformation can occur. Our study is designed to inform CRT practices adopted by Chinese immigrant teachers. We also provide implications for future pedagogical approach and teacher development according to the concepts of Asian Critical (AsianCrit) framework proposed by Iftikar and Museus (2018, p. 940-941). The AsianCrit integrates CRT research with the perspectives of Asian American experiences to fill gaps in the analysis and scholarship of CRT within U.S. education. We adapted the seven interrelated tenets of AsianCrit and outlined examples that can be applicable for Asian/Asian American teachers in the U.S. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Adapted AsianCrit Framework for Asian American Teachers in the United States

Seven tenets of AsianCrit	Examples applicable for Asian American teachers
<p>Asianization Asian American ethnic groups are often shaped by racialized assumptions and stereotypes as “model minorities,” “perpetual foreigners” and “threatening yellow peril.”</p>	<p>The Asian American narratives and histories have long been missing or misrepresented to reinforce stereotypes (e.g., monolithically hardworking laborers) in school curriculum (Kim & Hsieh, 2021).</p>
<p>Transnational contexts Critical analyses of “past and present global economic, political, and social processes” are essential to reflect how racism impacts experiences of Asian Americans.</p>	<p>There is the lack of attention and key readings for preservice Asian American teachers to critically reflect on their racial identity and interrogate their positionality and teaching role (Philip, 2012).</p>
<p>(Re)constructive history The realities of Asian Americans are typically silenced in U.S. history.</p>	<p>Asian American teachers often struggle to find models and designs to integrate diverse Asian American experiences and perspectives into social studies lessons (Hsieh, 2021).</p>
<p>Strategic (anti)essentialism Asian Americans can counter the racialization process by confronting White supremacy.</p>	<p>Suggestions for Asian American teachers include affirming racial/ethnic identities for Asian American students and facilitating cross-cultural discourses through classroom interactions (Chow, 2021)</p>
<p>Intersectionality Racial identities and lived experiences of Asian Americans are intersected with racism and other oppressive systems.</p>	<p>Asian American female classroom teachers are largely underrepresented in the K–12 teaching profession and more prone to “racialized sexualization” related to their dress and physical appearances (Endo, 2015, p. 615)</p>
<p>Story, theory, and praxis Scholarly works that analyze Asian Americans’ “experiential knowledge” can offer authentic perspectives that reflect the realities.</p>	<p>An AsianCrit study about State U.S. history curriculum standards found that Asian Americans’ stories of civil rights “almost lost in the reviewed standards.” (An, 2016, p. 265)</p>
<p>Commitment to social justice AsianCrit aims to eliminate systemic forms of oppression and exploitation.</p>	<p>Research is needed to explore how the internalization of model minority might impact Asian American teachers’ perspectives on social justice advocacy for other communities of color (e.g., anti-Blackness; Iftikar & Museus, 2018).</p>

The exhaustive discussion of the implementation of AsianCrit in American classrooms is beyond the scope of this study; Nonetheless, we believe AsianCrit can construct spaces for critical narratives of Asian American educators originated from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to affirm diverse insights on CRT practices and teacher education for future research and policymaking. Our current study draws close attention to the firsthand learning and teaching experiences of Chinese immigrant teachers who work in the U.S. to foster multiple voices and expand the understanding of the diversity of the Asian American communities.

Empirical Literature Review on Immigrant Teachers' CRT Practices

The four research questions of our study build on an empirical literature base that primarily addresses immigrant teachers' U.S. schooling practices. Immigrant teachers from Asian backgrounds may face more complex challenges when they begin their profession in American classrooms because of the potential conflicts arising from the fundamental differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. A qualitative study in California indicated that immigrant teachers from predominantly collectivistic backgrounds are more likely to have conflicts in areas such as classroom management and teacher-student responsibility because of cultural differences, so mentors play a significant role in supporting immigrant teachers' professional development (Mercado and Trumbull, 2018). Another qualitative research discussed the main challenges (e.g., cross-cultural differences in student-teacher expectations and implementation of classroom practices) Arabic and Chinese teachers encountered when they transitioned from teacher-centered classrooms into learner-centered U.S. schools to teach diverse learners (Haley and Ferro, 2011). It is worth noting that immigrant teachers, especially

those growing up with educational experiences that differ from American culture, could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how the concept of CRT is perceived by learners who share similar immigrant backgrounds.

In the overview of the published CRT studies regarding Chinese teachers in U.S. schools over the last two decades (e.g., Sheets & Chew, 2002; Wu, 2011; Zhou and Li, 2014), we observed recurring themes that had been examined. Those themes included power dynamics in the classroom, cultural differences in classroom management strategies, and teacher-student expectations. Zhou and Li (2014, p.26) reported that Chinese language teachers urgently needed to learn management skills and “pedagogical language local teachers employ to manage the class” in the U.S. Wu (2011), in her cross-case analysis of Chinese language teachers in a Chinese school in South Texas, emphasized the importance of sharing power with the students while teaching and integrating Chinese culture into the curriculum.

To enrich the empirical literature on this topic, we explicitly discuss how Chinese immigrant teachers navigated their cross-cultural experiences and how they perceived the relevance of CRT in their practices. Our study highlights the pedagogical methods they adopted to engage students in learning cultural topics across educational settings in the U.S. The findings can allow educators and policymakers to *visualize* the actual implementation of CRT from the perspectives of underrepresented teachers. As mentioned earlier, we hope the discussions in this article can be used for research on Asian American/Asian teachers in mainstream U.S. education in response to the efforts to diversify a teaching force dedicated to culturally inclusive practices.

Research Methodology

This research utilized a multiple case study approach emerging from extended interviews with three Chinese-immigrant teachers who were educated in China, thus experiencing double “apprenticeship(s) of observation” described by Lortie (2002) as playing a central role in teacher training when teachers reflect on and emulate their own past teachers. The three participants may also have received teacher training or state-run public education in China, a country which emphasizes performance on standardized tests but also might be regarded as a more collectivist culture than the U.S., a country rooted in competition and individualism. A multiple case study design was selected so that three case studies could illustrate how transnationally trained teachers view CRT (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2009, p.39) observes “the logic of replication” so that one person alone does not need to speak for an entire group and yet three individual voices can be heard. Common themes across the cases were developed based on interviews conducted.

Participants

All three participants are well-known by one or both authors from friendly social and vocational interactions, so trust was established in ongoing relationships with the three immigrant educators. We define immigrant educators as those who are foreign-born (outside the U.S.), first-generation immigrants whose first language is not English. Participant 1 or “Jiang” (a pseudonym) teaches three levels of Chinese at a public middle school in an affluent city in the Pacific Northwest. She received teacher certification in both China and the U.S. About 70 percent of her middle school students are Asian (Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indian, and Korean), and about 30 percent had other heritages (Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic). Jiang noted her school was a

diverse community, so she taught more Asian students than was typical in the state. Jiang studied English since her sixth year in primary school in China. She can also speak some Japanese.

Jiang noted that her transition to teaching in the U.S. required more professional training and switching from teaching adults to teaching adolescents. After she graduated from teacher training in China in 2002, she taught at a university until 2012. She came to the U.S. on a H4 visa that did not approve her to work. However, she could attend university, so she obtained her teacher certification in the U.S. After receiving a green card (permanent residency), she started working. Jiang observed her international teaching trajectory as follows:

I think teaching is a very meaningful job because it helps so many people.

Teachers are able to support students and students' families . . . It was a natural transition for me to be a teacher in [the] U.S. Getting a teacher certification is of utmost importance if you want to be a teacher. I decided to be a teacher when I first came to the U.S. in 2012. . . After the completion of testing, I attended a teacher certification program. Overall, my career was pretty smooth. My child was born while I was in the program, so I took a gap for a while. As it turned out, I became a teacher pretty quickly, so I was lucky.

Participant 2 was given the pseudonym "June" since she uses an American name for her public identity. She teaches elementary school, third and fourth grades, at a religious preparatory school. The subjects she teaches include mathematics, language arts, history, science, and Bible as an elective course. June graduated from high school in China then came to the U.S. after she took the college entrance exam. She obtained a

Bachelor's degree in anthropology and minored in theatre as an undergraduate and earned a Master's degree in teaching in the U.S. Her students are mostly European-American, but she has only eight students because her school is a private school. June started learning English in 4th grade but also studied French at college for about two years. She can understand Cantonese as well. June explained how she became a teacher, observing that she felt a theological calling to do so, "In my youth, I enjoyed being around children so much. I'm always so happy when I'm with them. I sense that this is God's calling for me."

Participant 3, "Xi," is a university professor of Chinese in an undergraduate linguistics program at a four-year university. Her duties include teaching language classes and Chinese culture classes. Her teaching experience began in 1999 when she finished college and obtained a position at a private three-year college in China. Then she transferred to a four-year public university with a long history in China in 2003. She completed her bachelor's degree in English Literature and Master's degree in Language Education in China. Once she came to the U.S., she completed a Master's degree in Theology and a Ph.D. in Education. Xi described her students as mostly European-American with some Asian-Americans and a few African-American students. A couple of her students were Asian students from Asia.

Like Jiang and June, Xi had studied English for several years. "So English [was] a required class in China in the past. In China, my English education started from middle school to high school, and then in college my major was English. Actually, it was kind of pretty long." During college in China, she also studied German and later studied Hebrew

as part of her theology degree in the U.S. Like June, Xi felt that teaching was a religious calling.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The first author, who is Chinese, speaks English, Mandarin, and Cantonese fluently. She offered participants one and two the opportunity to be interviewed in English, Mandarin, or Cantonese. They chose to be interviewed in Mandarin. The interviews needed to be translated to English so the second author, who is White and does not speak Mandarin or Cantonese, could assist the first author in coding and theming participant utterances. Participant three was interviewed in English by the second author because that is the only language that the interviewer and interviewee had in common. Each participant participated in two interviews lasting about half an hour to 45 minutes. The first interview was conducted to discover beliefs about culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally relevant education. The second interview was conducted a week or two later to allow participants to think about their recent teaching practices that were intended to be culturally responsive.

The only source of data came from interviews because of the transcribing time necessary to translate every word of discourse into two languages. Interview questions were developed to draw out themes of how teachers were trained to direct students to use cultural referents so that their classrooms could collectively build content knowledge through critical investigations of power relationships embedded in curriculum based on students' existing cultural knowledge. The data was collected by transcribing questions (30 in total) and participant responses in both Mandarin and English. Interviews were conducted on Zoom, transcribed in both languages, and then coded multiple times until

we agreed on an existing framework for thematic analysis that responded to research questions, albeit the themes were not used in a research study but presented as a theoretical framework for culturally responsive teaching.

As we developed our interview protocol, we arranged questions 1-4 to understand the participants' present teaching contexts as explained above. Questions 5-10 asked about the participants' education and teacher training. Questions 11 and 12 attempted to address mentoring in teacher training in both countries. Questions 13 to 16 attempted to clarify prior knowledge of and comparative education's role in understanding culturally inclusive teaching. Questions 17 and 18 addressed bilingual language instruction in culturally inclusive teaching. Questions 19 through 28 were included for description of specific culturally inclusive practices that teachers may have used. Questions 29 and 30 were reserved for a second interview a few weeks later so that teachers could specifically name the culturally inclusive practices they had utilized in the past few weeks.

After translating our interviews in two cases from Mandarin to English, we coded six transcripts according to themes from our theoretical framework on culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). The coding system of Aronson & Laughter (2016) was based on CRT and culturally relevant pedagogy with the lenses of both teachers and students, so we chose to replicate this existing system. Three broad categories existed in Aronson & Laughter (2016)'s coding scheme:

The first category emphasized teacher actions resulting in culturally responsive teaching in which the purpose of teaching was revealed as social and academic empowerment for students. Statements were coded based on if the described teacher

action showed the multidimensionality of teaching in a context of cultural variety, the importance of culturally validating students while teaching, the importance of social, emotional, and political comprehensiveness when talking about culture with students, teaching for school and societal transformation through language development, and emancipation or liberation from oppressive educational practices and ideologies. When teacher statements about their goals or practices did not fit into these categories, new categories were created so that we felt better encapsulated their responses.

A second major category for teacher statements was culturally relevant pedagogy, which counted statements on the beliefs and values of teachers. Two themes by Aronson and Laughter (2016) were used to capture teacher responses: the teacher's value of cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness when teaching. Other categories were constructed when these themes did not seem to capture a teacher's statement.

A third broad category was culturally relevant education in which teachers discussed student histories and the learning activities they enacted with a student lens. This category focused on students rather than teachers. Themes that emerged were the academic skills and concepts taught to students centering on culture, the importance of having students critically reflect on culture, cultural competency as an important goal for students to learn, and having students critique discourses of power in class.

We added additional themes that our borrowed coding system did not map well onto existing themes. Categories are represented in Table 2 with the original themes in bold print and our added themes not bolded. We used the coding results in Table 2 to decide on the themes we wished to emphasize as most important. Every uninterrupted participant response after each question asked by the interviewer was counted separately.

Responses that emphasized the teacher's role or actions in culturally responsive action were considered "teacher action" and coded as "culturally responsive teaching."

Responses that emphasized the teacher's beliefs or values behind their action were coded as "culturally relevant pedagogy." Responses that emphasized what students did do or should do in classrooms were considered "student activities" and were coded as "culturally relevant education."

Table 2

Coding System of Participant Responses

Culturally responsive teaching teacher actions	Culturally relevant pedagogy	Culturally relevant education
Social and academic empowerment	Beliefs and values of teachers	Student histories and learning activities
Multidimensionality	Academic achievement	Academic skills and concepts
Cultural validation	Cultural competence	Critical reflection
Social, emotional, and political comprehensiveness	Sociopolitical consciousness	Cultural competence
School and societal transformation	Cultural competence	Critique discourses of power
Language development	Sociopolitical consciousness	*Interdisciplinary connections
Emancipation or liberation from oppressive educational practices and ideologies	*Critical reflection	*Student profiles
*Teacher training	*Knowledge of language theory	*Class bonding
*Teacher experience	*Theological/vocational calling	
*Mentoring		
*Multilingualism		
*Comparing settings and students		
*Educational setting(s)		
*Literacy Activity		
*Assessment		
*Teacher fund of knowledge		
*Cultural knowledge		
*Knowledge of student(s)		
*Pedagogical knowledge		
*Critical reflection		

Note. This table is based on the synthesis of categories of culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally relevant education.

Findings

Theme 1: Marked Differences in Teacher Training and Mentoring across Countries

Our first question is how Chinese immigrant teachers who received public education in China navigate CRT pedagogies promoted in U.S. teacher training programs. Teacher training and mentoring was a prevalent theme for incorporating culturally responsive teaching into curriculum and instruction. All three participants had spent significant time in teacher education including achieving graduate degrees outside of their home country China. This meant the primary language of instruction was English. The cultural values they learned were different than those of their youth.

Jiang was certified to teach in both China and the U.S. She had participated in a transnational teacher training program while being trained to teach in China. She reported,

While I had my first teaching job in 2002, I felt I was very lucky because my senior teachers at the department were very nice. My school created a new program called E-commerce. The school invited a university in Australia to jointly run the program. Those teachers from the Australian university introduced many innovative pedagogies. I learned a lot from the foreign specialists. They focused on interactive classrooms over traditional classrooms.

Jiang's experience with teacher training in China had been what she considered progressive in that it emphasized more than exam results and included much observation of students. This required learning new pedagogies where students were to be more participative in their own learning. Jiang also noted that becoming a teacher (and staying a teacher) was less competitive in China. She said,

I think the teaching training system in the U.S. is a knockout system. In China, people go to “Normal School” (teacher training school) and receive some training. Knockouts do not exist. Or people like me have received a teaching offer. They receive training after they have got the offer. So, a knockout is not possible. In China, there is an “all-pass” system. People are invited to join and get a pass . . . In contrast, the U.S. has an “elimination/knock-out system.”

June had not taught in China. Her teacher training in the U.S. required much reading and did not seem well-connected in content, although she found practicum experiences and the reading valuable in hindsight. June found significant differences in her mentoring from mentors who grew up in China and mentors who grew up in the U.S. She explained,

The mentor who spoke English was very open, and the way she acted was more gentle. The Chinese teacher (her mentor) was very strict. But I knew she particularly favored me and cared about me so much. We (the Chinese teacher and June) remain in good contact.

June’s teacher training in the U.S. seemed less coherent and more theoretical than she would have liked, however her Chinese teacher mentor in the U.S. had been particularly substantive in teaching her language pedagogy. She recalled,

The Chinese teacher [her mentor] taught in an immersion classroom, so she told me that I had to forget how to speak English when I step in the class to teach Chinese. She said I need to implement total immersion. I should be able to give explanation in Chinese all the time. She recommended that I should forget English and change into the Chinese mindset when I talk with students.

June respected her mentor's advice. She noted that when she taught Mandarin in the U.S., she learned to offer her students opportunities to examine Chinese culture and how it affected and was affected by language.

Xi observed significant differences in her teacher training in both countries. She said,

I feel that at [name of American university] the professors in the doctoral programs served students a lot. For example, in the doctoral classes, our professors often brought food and hosted some things for students. But in China, this was reversed. I feel that [in China] the students actually needed to show respect to the professors, and we actually needed to [bring] gifts to the professors. If we hung out with the professors, [if] we had dinner or lunch with the professors, the professors would not pay. Actually, all the students paid the cost. [If] students and professors hung out [performing] karaoke together, students actually paid all the costs.

Xi, who now worked at the university where she received her doctorate in an untenured professor position, regarded her college training in China as more hierarchical than was the case in the U.S..

The three interviews yielded differences in teacher training in the U.S. and China. Jiang was familiar with culturally responsive teaching from her education in China that welcomed Australian critique of how schooling should be done to be more inclusive of Chinese students. June recognized she received the most straightforward advice from her Chinese mentor in the U.S. compared to her American mentor. Xi noted that mentors in

the U.S. thought about their economic status differently than Chinese professors/mentors who expected more honor as intellectual elders.

Theme 2: Cultural Knowledge and Critical Reflection of Compared Educational Systems

Our second question was how transnationally trained teachers perceive the concept of CRT. The three participants in this research had a great deal of cultural knowledge of both China and the U.S. as demonstrated in the critical reflection that occurred when they compared their teaching experiences cross-nationally, especially when they discussed U.S. curriculum. Understanding cultural differences was emphasized as significant learning targets. Jiang noted,

Teaching culture is quite important. Sometimes I include culture as a supplementary topic in my lessons. Sometimes I plan a lesson specifically, to teach my students about culture. It is not just Chinese culture. I also talk about cultures in other countries. Cultural comparison is often seen. For instance, when I talk about eating habits, I will compare Thanksgiving and Mid-Autumn festival. Is there anything people eat and drink that they have in common? What about the differences? What are the cultural beliefs and values?

June reflected how teaching in the U.S. allowed her to better understand teaching in China, especially that it tended to emphasize the role of the teacher as transmitting knowledge to large audiences of students. She explained,

As there are too many people in China, you may not be able to give each student the same attention in class. Nevertheless, I would try to implement some of the skills I practice in the U.S. and see if that would help. For example, students'

seating in Chinese classrooms are in rows, but I would prefer to have them sitting in groups so that their interactions and discussions would be more effective. They wouldn't just sit alone to do worksheets or drills. I would use some learner-centered skills or hands-on activities.

June expressed that U.S. students tended to have more individual attention from teachers and teacher-student dialogues about what was being learned and why it was important.

Xi learned that individualism was very present in student mindsets and that her first goal as a university professor needed to understand the world of her students. She said,

I feel that I can actually understand [how to teach] after I understand the students' mindset and the culture. I feel that I can actually change my expectations. So [I] just find an approach that is working for these students. I should teach from students' perspectives. Initially maybe I was a little shocked at this mindset. I know this is their culture, they [grew] up in this culture. I shouldn't expect they can change overnight and just accept my cultural standards. On the contrary, I should do something to make them progress.

Xi had come to understand that teaching successfully at a U.S. university required her to understand that her students were consumers and that she had to be hospitable to the student culture. In all three occurrences, "understand" was the operative verb when it came to successfully teaching students in the U.S. All three participants also emphasized the idea of teachers "serving students" and the need to develop a sense of community in

their classrooms, especially by critically reflecting on culture with their students and after teaching.

However, the three educators also had varying notions of what they understood about student culture which manifested in how they arranged cultural knowledge taught to students. Jiang arranged curriculum around essential questions so that students could compare cultures. June indicated she wanted students to be immersed in “hands on” activities and “group” work, a focus on activities rather than cultural curriculum. Xi noted that knowing students’ cultural mindsets was critical to assessing their progression of knowledge.

Theme 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching Means Knowing Your Student Profiles

Our third question inquired about the pedagogical thinking that precipitated students engaging in cultural topics. All three participants believed the more they knew about their students’ cultures, the better teachers they would be. Jiang had a high percentage of Asian students, but she desired to understand cultural nuances, both similarities and dissimilarities in cultural backgrounds as differences in identities were important to teaching U.S. students. She noted,

There are students from other races. The Asian students are Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Koreans. There are also Indians. Other ethnic groups include Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics . . . In China, people tend to recognize a group more than an individual. For example, if other people are capable of doing that, why can’t you? You need to do the same thing. In the U.S., teachers focus more in individual students’ strengths and weaknesses, give them some

accommodations, and make some adjustments or changes according to every student's situation.

For Jiang, culturally responsive teaching in the U.S. meant first knowing the learning needs of her students.

June valued cultural dialogue with all students, both those with Chinese heritage and those who understood they too had a culture and were eager to discuss how it contributed to their identities. June described a special bond with a Chinese boy in her class. She said,

There is a kid in my class. The student's parents speak Cantonese, but they are very Westernized. They speak English at our parent-teacher Conference . . . The kid still had two pieces of mooncakes in the lunchbox yesterday. I asked him, "You're still eating mooncake?" He wished me a happy Chinese New Year in Cantonese last year. I felt so good. His mom also messaged me that he wrote a Chinese couplet on the red banner at home. His Chinese calligraphy looked pretty good.

But she also described bonds with other students in her class as well who were not Chinese or Chinese-American. She noted,

Also, there is a kid whose mom is from England. His mom got married when she came to the U.S. on a short-term mission trip. His mom is British. He often tells me about his family members in Britan and [about their] British accent.

Xi wanted all students to speak and learn about culture in all her classes because she believed that language and culture was inextricably linked. She said,

When I know the students' backgrounds, I want students from different backgrounds to share. The class is about Chinese and the different cultures, but I do want to hear about the different cultures. In my language class, I have a Korean-American, and I also ask her to share something . . . I really ask them to share in my language class.

Xi's idea of a successful classroom was dialogic classroom discussion where students of all cultures could compare and contrast knowledge of culture and the "whys" of language usage. This was reflected in Jiang and June's responses as well. However, Jiang thought about student learning differences before thinking about cultural content. June thought about the family stories of students before addressing cultural content. Xi thought about equality of voices in class discussions when people shared about their cultures in class discussions.

Theme 4: The Goal of Culturally Responsive Teaching is Classroom Harmony Created through Bonding

Our last question inquired about the outcomes through CRT practices. All three teachers emphasized that sharing of diverse cultures should ultimately lead to harmonious student interactions and deeper understanding of similarities and differences across cultures.

Jiang emphasized her storytelling role as a teacher and how engaging cultural knowledge can be if students were offered opportunities to learn about the culture of teachers and perhaps other students. She said,

I shared with them the differences between schools in China and schools in the U.S. For example, how different the classes and the bell schedules [are]. Also,

American students need to go to teachers' classrooms, while in China students stay in their home rooms. Also, Chinese students wear school uniforms, but American students don't have school uniforms. Some said I [seem to] prefer American schools. They explained why they preferred American schools. Some said Chinese schools are quite good.

June used many creative literacy texts and activities to create a harmonious classroom environment where students could talk about a particular culture, including their own. She used the motif of camping to inspire an atmosphere to talk about historical cultures. In her second interview, she explained that students were currently camping in Egypt. June observed,

I think things that are different from my own [culture] give me a sense of excitement. When we live in our own countries, we are in our comfort zone to discuss other people's cultures. In fact, you won't have the cultural shock, and you don't have to take a risk as you won't actually move to that country.

Xi used food preparation and holiday crafts and decorating to bond with her students. She recalled,

I invited my Colloquium students (since they are freshmen) to some hot pot events and the students can then come and eat hot pot together since it's part of the Chinese cuisine. So, they can have this cultural experience and get to know each other better.

The end goal for all three teachers was to create a safe, respectful environment to learn about people throughout history, their motivations, their concerns, their interests. However, the critical reflection about their culturally responsive practices revealed that

their main purpose of implementing CRT was to build classroom harmony. The goal was not to question authority as is the case in the theory building of Geneva Gay (2018) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), but to allow students to become cultural authorities in finding their own cultural identities in comparing and contrasting identities with others in the class.

Limitations

This study is limited by the small research sample of three Chinese immigrant teachers who were interviewed and their various and divergent teaching contexts, and therefore the results cannot be generalized to other teaching populations. Another limitation is that the teachers were not observed in attempting to implement culturally responsive teaching practices, so the researchers had to rely on their descriptions of their pedagogy and teaching. Future studies with data analysis from both interviews and class observations will be more beneficial.

Discussions

Participant responses indicated that teacher training and education is still immensely different in China than in the U.S. Teacher training was much more competitive in the U.S. Mentoring techniques in the U.S. varied by the nationalities of teacher mentors (with Chinese mentors being the most explicit in pedagogical advice) and teacher educators (with Chinese professors acting more hierarchical). All three teachers understood from experiences that the transition from teaching or being trained in a collectivist society to an individualist society meant vast differences in thinking about teaching and communicating information to students. Teaching effectively in the U.S. could not be done without knowing every individual student's profile. However, knowing

these individual profiles, including the cultural heritages and stories of students could form bonds of harmony with students across varieties of cultures because transnationally trained teachers were vigilant about teaching about culture and motivated to be co-learners with students about cultures.

Our study found that when Chinese immigrant teachers were assigned to mentor teachers during student teaching and their first year of teaching in American public schools, they developed close relationships with mentors who shared their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The teacher participants highly valued the direct and specific feedback provided by their mentors such as instructional strategies and lesson designs. They also developed a deeper-level connection (e.g., values, beliefs, and coping strategies) rather than surface-level similarities (e.g., age, race, and gender). In view that the teaching force and student populations in the U.S. are both becoming more diverse, it is necessary to provide mentoring support that can promote cross-cultural competence in professional development in order to effectively engage students in learning experiences (Mercado and Trumbull, 2018). One implication from this finding is to further investigate how the demographic and cultural alignment with a mentor teacher could impact the pedagogical practices of Asian American teachers, their sense of identity in teaching, and their self-efficacy in countering racialized assumptions.

When comparing the classroom settings in China and the U.S., teacher participants in our study noticed a stark contrast in Chinese and American student profiles, and they all stated that the racial backgrounds, family cultures, and learning needs among U.S. students are far more varied in public education. Since immigrant teachers are educated partially in their home countries and partially in the U.S., they have

substantial cross-cultural experiences and cultural assets to deliver culturally inclusive content for students of their culture and are adaptive to learn about other cultures as well. Nevertheless, integrating intercultural topics in classroom instruction to dismantle stereotypical views requires critical consciousness. Another implication from this study is to extend the current AsianCrit literature by exploring how the model minority myth impacts Asian immigrant teachers' attitudes toward culturally inclusive practices and other social justice topics (e.g., racial discrimination and gender equality) regarding other communities of color. It is also worth observing the actual classroom practices of Asian immigrant teachers and analyzing how they employ culturally responsive strategies to facilitate cross-cultural discourses and engage students in classroom interactions.

All three Chinese immigrant teachers in our interviews conceptualized that the goal of culturally inclusive teaching was to cultivate harmony and contrive congeniality among students. They shared the belief that teaching culture is important as students with cultural competence and multilingual skills are likely to broaden their worldviews, strengthen intercultural understanding, and promote harmonious bonding. Their literacy instruction focused on comparative analysis of culture and interdisciplinary learning (e.g., combining history and science content knowledge) rather than explicitly addressing racism and systems of oppression. From their perspectives, the goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help students from diverse backgrounds develop a sense of interdependence and achieve harmony in diversity. However, the effectiveness of U.S. classroom management skills and instructional strategies specifically shaped by collectivistic values and implemented by Asian American teachers has been rarely studied in prior CRT literature. Still, more empirical work must be done to investigate

how the cultural beliefs of educators of color shape their teaching practices and promote an inclusive learning environment for all students.

Conclusion and Implications

Responses from the teacher participants indicated three potential areas of critical conversations on the pedagogical knowledge that immigrant teachers in the U.S. could harness to promote culturally inclusive school practices. Responses also unpacked that those teachers who are trained in two cultures think about culture as an important variable in both planning to teach and as the learning targets of teaching. It is worthwhile for U.S. educational policymakers to consider integrating cross-cultural educational topics and critical frameworks (e.g., AsianCrit) of CRT into teacher education to deepen understandings of cultural diversity. We believe that the specific priority for research on culturally inclusive practices is to examine the variety of historical narratives, sociocultural values, and cultural experiences that teachers utilize to shape their instructional practices supporting students from various backgrounds.

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Empowering English Learners in the Classroom Through Culturally Responsive Social–Emotional Teaching Practices⁴

Over the past two decades, the population of K–12 school-age children in the United States has become increasingly diverse. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (de Brey, 2019), the most dramatic decline is seen in the percentage of White children, from 62% to 51%. On the other hand, the percentages of children from other racial/ethnic groups have grown steadily: Asian children from three percent to five percent; Hispanic-origin children from 16% to 25%; and biracial or multiracial children from two percent to four percent. The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in the U.S. population also indicates a significant growth of school-age children who speak more than one language in their homes. While linguistically and culturally diverse children is a broader term used to describe children who are from homes where languages other than English are spoken and diverse cultural practices are observed, English learners (ELs) or English language learners (ELLs) is the term commonly used by the federal government to describe students who enter K–12 schools with varying levels of English language proficiency and receive instruction from any language assistance program (Cook, 2015). For the purpose of consistency, we use the term English learners (ELs) throughout this paper. The ELs in public schools have grown from 8.1% to 10.1% between 2000 and 2017 (NCES, 2020) and is projected to be the fastest growing group of students in K–12 education (Kanno & Cromley, 2015). It is important to note that while some ELs are recent immigrants, most of them are born and raised in the United States (Zong &

⁴ Lau, W. S., & Shea, M. (2022). Empowering English learners in the classroom through culturally responsive social–emotional teaching practices. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2078337>

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Research has shown that ELs often face obstacles in multiple domains. Less developed English language skills may affect ELs' mastery of academic content (Kanno & Grosik, 2012), which can negatively impact their grades, standardized test scores, and college preparation such as essay writing development and advanced course placement (Kanno & Cromley, 2015). The effect is particularly pronounced among ELs who begin to learn English after elementary school, as they have less time to acquire sufficient academic English skills (Kanno & Harklau, 2012). ELs also tend to encounter a myriad of social–emotional challenges. Those who have recently immigrated to the U.S. might experience disrupted social networks, cultural adjustment difficulties, and acculturative stress (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014; Yeh et al., 2008). They are also at an increased risk of being ridiculed, harassed, or bullied due to their accented speech, cultural practices, or mannerisms (Peguero, 2008; Shea et al., 2016). U.S.-born ELs also experience stress and intergenerational conflict due to differential acculturation rate, altered family structure and dynamics, role-reversal, and added responsibilities such as being a cultural broker for their family members (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014; Yeh et al., 2008).

Overview of Social–Emotional Learning Frameworks

The first Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conference took place in 1994 to promote social–emotional learning (SEL) with a primary aim to foster youngsters' well-being and academic learning in North American schools. In the early 1990s, emotional intelligence (EI) catapulted its four domains (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) into

global awareness (Goleman, 1995). The CASEL-5 framework incorporated the four domains of EI with the addition of responsible decision-making to illustrate five core domains of SEL competencies (CASEL, 2020). This framework posited that SEL instruction is not only about imparting behavioral skills into a lesson; rather, it is distinguished as a systemic approach to promoting SEL teaching and learning across multiple contexts including families, classrooms, schools, and communities. Since the inception of the CASEL model, academic work examining how to integrate SEL into classroom practices and academic curriculum emerged in the U.S. (Elias & Arnold, 2006) and many other countries around the world (Durlak et al., 2015).

Jones and Bouffard (2012) have identified three core SEL processes for youngsters to focus on: cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and social/interpersonal skills. Cognitive regulation is often referred to executive function skills such as planning, setting goals, problem-solving, making conscious choices, and organizing. Emotional processes are skills that help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions, as well as understand and address others' feelings, whereas interacting positively with others in social situations is an example of social/interpersonal skills. In addition to cognitive, social, and emotional processes, Frey et al. (2019) proposed two additional components – identity/agency and public spirit – to make up their five-tenet SEL framework, which aims at incorporating SEL into subject areas. Both frameworks emphasize that SEL should be embedded into an academic curriculum and taught in the classroom context to reinforce children's social and emotional development alongside their academic learning.

Recently, CASEL (Niemi, 2020) has updated its definition of SEL that seeks to weave in contextually relevant and culturally responsive SEL into school practices, as the perception and understanding of students' development of social–emotional competencies vary based on different cultural norms and social identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation). For instance, research has shown that ethnic minority students are more prone to experience stereotype threats that may affect their academic performance and emotional displays (Spencer et al., 2016).

In the service of equity, the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child designed an Anchor Competencies Framework (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020), which was built upon the CASEL-5's framework by proposing seven anchor competencies, namely (a) building trusting relationships, (b) fostering self-reflection, (c) fostering a growth mindset, (d) cultivating perseverance, (e) creating community, (f) promoting collaborative learning, and (g) responding constructively across differences. These seven competencies are deemed essential to promoting students' well-being in diverse classrooms. Although many school practitioners have learned about these SEL models, the need for studies examining the effective instruction and assessment of SEL competencies in current classroom curriculum remains high.

Effectiveness of SEL Implementation in K–12 Schools

Along with the development of a variety of SEL frameworks, researchers and educators began to evaluate the effectiveness of SEL curriculum and programs in schools (Durlak et al., 2011), as well as SEL practices in classrooms (Zins et al., 2004). The majority of SEL programs launched in the United States are grounded in the CASEL-5 framework through which SEL skills are explicitly modeled and imparted to all children.

These SEL interventions can generally be categorized into two types: 1) building a classroom social environment and 2) promoting individual SEL skills (Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015). For instance, the Caring School Community program is focused on integrating SEL with academic subjects to create an inclusive social environment for classroom practices (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, 2017), whereas the Second Step Early Learning curriculum has included reading books related to a variety of themes (e.g., anti-bullying), infusing stories with discussion and reviewing lesson units with emphasis on individual skills such as emotion management (Upshur et al., 2017).

Meta-analyses have shown that SEL programs delivered in a classroom setting lead to positive academic outcomes, including students' grade-point average of academic subjects (Sklad et al., 2012). This may not be a surprising result as a holistic education system facilitating learners' social-emotional development has been shown to reinforce learners' cognitive skills (Frydenberg et al., 2017). One SEL-infused curriculum that helps students achieve their literacy learning goals is the RULER Feeling Words Curriculum. English Language Arts (ELA) lessons with the RULER approach help students learn how to recognize, label, and express their emotional reactions by using different descriptive words, as well as identify and manage strong emotional reactions (Maurer & Brackett, 2004). An empirical study (Rivers et al., 2013) comparing fifth and sixth grade ELA classrooms using the RULER approach with those without the approach showed that the RULER classrooms yielded more cooperative learning opportunities, better teacher and student relationships, and positive interactions among students.

Cultural Relevance of SEL Programming

Despite the growing interest in evaluating school-based SEL programs (Jones et al., 2017), very few studies have investigated the effect of SEL interventions within historically underrepresented or marginalized school communities, or across cultural and social contexts (Humphrey, 2013). Research has shown that emotion understanding and emotional regulation are more culturally specific (Shao et al., 2015). Children from diverse backgrounds may have different interpretations of appropriate social and emotional behaviors. For example, students who were raised in cultures rooted in a Confucian heritage may have been taught to show respect to teachers by practicing self-effacement (Kwak et al., 2016). In a typical Asian classroom, students are encouraged to internally process information at their own pace. Silence usually signifies students' attentive listening and respect rather than a lack of engagement. Furthermore, in many African and Latinx communities, it is considered disrespectful for a child to maintain direct eye contact with an adult who is speaking to them. Thus, students who have transitioned to U.S. schools from educational systems outside of the U.S. may feel uncomfortable or confused in the new learning environment when they interact with their teachers and peers who uphold fundamentally different cultural values and behavioral norms.

Given that the perception and mastery of SEL skills can be influenced by cultural and contextual factors, more recent studies began to investigate the cross-cultural transferability of SEL instruction. A research study on grit (O'Neal et al., 2019) stated that many grit-based initiatives tended to overlook structural and contextual factors such as racism and discrimination by putting the responsibility of being perseverant and

resilient on the individuals. Others have critiqued that SEL content and instructional methods tend to rely heavily on trait-based interpretations and fixed cultural assumptions (Hoffman, 2009), which limit students' ability to express their social and emotional skills. For example, a set of SEL techniques related to behavioral self-control and emotion regulation may be taught as rules that students should follow regardless of their own cultural upbringing and preferences.

A case study conducted by Wood (2020) has found that teachers and staff tend to endorse a narrow view of SEL as a behavioral management strategy rather than a culturally inclusive practice to enhance students' social competency. When staff members are underprepared to work with culturally diverse student populations, the concept of SEL instructed in a classroom "reinforces rather than challenges the deficit paradigm by privileging ways of thinking, feeling, and believing embraced by the dominant culture" (Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens, 2020, p. 61).

Culturally Responsive Strategies for Integrating SEL in English Language Teaching

In this section, we first describe how SEL and literacy development complement one another, and then we discuss the need for incorporating culturally responsive pedagogies for making SEL-integrated curriculum accessible for ELs.

SEL in Literacy Development

A nationwide report showed that half of the U.S. states have issued or been in the process of formulating guidelines and standards of SEL instruction at all grade levels, whereas numerous schools have implemented universal SEL interventions that are developed to deliver to the entire student population (CASEL, 2018). An example of the universal interventions is INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament, indicating a positive

effect on early elementary school students' math and reading performance, sustained attention, and behavioral outcomes (O'Connor et al., 2014). Another clinical trial study provided evidence for the effectiveness of the 4Rs Program (Jones et al., 2010), a school-based intervention with emphasis on cognitive, interpersonal, and literacy development of grades K–5 in the language arts curriculum. In the 4Rs Program, those students with the highest levels of baseline behavior risk and aggression identified by teachers benefited from learning about effective listening, handling strong emotions, and negotiation, and subsequently showed the greatest improvement in academic skills, attendance, reading achievement, and self-reported aggressive fantasies.

SEL competencies are known to largely overlap with the Common Core State Standards for ELA (English Language Arts). For example, literature and reading skills, such as comparing and contrasting two or more characters and describing the characters (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) outlined in the Common Core ELA Standards (CCSSI, 2010), are associated with students' SEL competencies in social awareness and relationship management. On the other hand, social perception (e.g., labeling emotions, matching the tone to facial expressions, and interpreting the intent of a speaker during social interactions) has been shown as a significant predictor of reading and listening comprehension (Froiland & Davison, 2019).

Similarly, the development of reading proficiency is not just grounded in literacy context and cognitive strategies, but also requires individuals' emotional self-regulation, reading motivation, and reading engagement (Liew et al., 2020). Literacy classrooms can provide favorable sociocultural contexts for delivering SEL as instructional content. For example, ELA classroom activities such as dialogic reading, literature circles, and role

plays can provide students with opportunities to practice communication skills, express feelings, and problem-solve. Metacognitive strategies, such as using reflection questions and planning learning objectives, can also be natural avenues for promoting students' cognitive regulation and responsible decision-making. A longitudinal research study conducted by Caemmerer and Keith (2015) suggested that children who are struggling academically can benefit from a combination of academic and social skill interventions, as improved social skills tended to also enhance students' math and reading achievement.

Nevertheless, educators should be aware that ELs with emerging English language skills or those without extensive background knowledge related to Eurocentric curriculum may face unique learning challenges. For instance, it is hard for ELs to understand figurative language uses (e.g., metaphors, idioms, and hyperbole), rhetorical devices, and historical settings in Western literature. Language and cultural barriers often hinder struggling readers from actively participating in class discussion and group projects. The challenges in the mastery of content may further impact ELs' performance on standardized tests of reading comprehension.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The term culturally responsive teaching, CRT, has been around since 1970s. Abrahams and Troike (1972) posited that teachers must understand cultural differences to be able to effectively teach and mentor their racially and culturally diverse students. Misconceptions about CRT, such as (a) cultural diversity topics are not relevant in White schools, and (b) CRT is remedial teaching that aims to correct problematic behaviors of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, remain. The misconceptions about fixing students' academic grades and externalizing symptoms erroneously assume that

students' failures stem from linguistic inferiority, family issues, or the lack of perseverance on their part, which reinforce the deficit paradigm. In contrast to these misconceptions, CRT has advocated for "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strength of these students" (Gay, 2018, p. 29). Thus, the overarching goal of CRT is to help learners develop more advanced cognitive skills, such that learners from diverse backgrounds are empowered with practical habits of critical thinking to process new content and become more self-directed to communicate with others. By building a social-emotional connection with students, educators grounded in CRT strive toward recognizing their students' worldviews and cultural influences and providing a safe learning environment. Thus, SEL, CRT, and behavioral interventions are compatible and complementary practices that can be used to maximize support for all students across various educational settings.

As aforementioned, very few studies have examined the effect of SEL interventions on CLD students. The standalone Strong Teens curriculum (Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016) invited Latinx and African American high school students to consider their own cultural heritage (e.g., languages and values) when setting personal and academic goals, as well as when applying SEL skills in their daily lives, and the curriculum has been associated with positive outcomes, such as increased resiliency. For example, students were encouraged to learn about examples of stress caused by acculturation and to set goals based on their family values. Another study conducted by Schonfeld et al. (2015) examined the effectiveness of the Promoting Alternative Thinking

Strategies (or PATHS) curriculum in elementary schools with predominantly Black and Hispanic/Latinx students. The PATHS intervention groups focused on four SEL areas including emotional awareness and understanding, self-control, interpersonal problem-solving skills, and developing peer relations. Students who participated in the PATHS intervention showed progress in three academic content areas – reading, writing, and math. However, neither intervention directly addressed the topics of culturally responsive strategies for integrating SEL in English language teaching for ELs.

In light of these gaps in current research, this paper proposes a new pedagogical approach that highlights the integration of SEL instruction into everyday literacy classrooms to promote culturally responsive English language teaching and learning. The acronym CULTURE is used to outline seven domains of SEL practices: Care, Understand, Listen, Trust, Unite, Reflect, and Empathize.

The CULTURE pedagogical approach supports a paradigm shift in SEL research: from focusing on “what to teach” to “how to teach” in diverse classrooms. The seven domains prioritize culturally responsive practices that could make SEL skills explicit and visible in classroom instructions for learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Teaching strategies that have been positively associated with student achievement, such as promoting student-teacher relationships and students’ sense of self-efficacy, can be further reinforced by the seven domains of culturally responsive SEL practices. The CULTURE approach is grounded in four foundational principles of culturally responsive practices: a) teaching attitudes and expectations, b) cultural communication in the classroom, c) culturally diverse content in the curriculum, and d) culturally congruent instructional strategies (Gay, 2018, p.53). In particular, each domain

utilizes student-centered pedagogical strategies that consider and integrate SEL competencies and cultural responsiveness. The seven prioritized domains can be introduced and emphasized at different times in the classroom, based on student needs, to accentuate the inextricable link between socio-emotional intelligence and cognitive functioning (e.g., thinking, remembering, problem-solving). Furthermore, practicing the CULTURE approach may enhance perceived collective teacher efficacy— teachers not only become more aware of their own values, assumptions, and biases as they engage in critical self-reflection; they may also share with their colleagues a mutual sense of belonging to the school community and commitment to help their students thrive.

In the following section, we describe each of the seven domains, and discuss their relevance to literacy development based on the conceptual links and evidence supported by previous research. In Table 3, we summarize the key characteristics of the CULTURE practices and provide some examples for applying the seven domains in English language classrooms. While culturally responsive SEL instruction is appropriate for all students, we believe the CULTURE approach is especially important for meeting ELs’ learning and social–emotional needs.

Table 3

Summary of Key Practices and Examples of CULTURE Pedagogical Approach

CULTURE Domains	Prioritized Pedagogical Practices	Sample Teacher Prompts
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide constructive and authentic feedback as well as specific praises focused on students’ effort and attempt to practice, perseverance, 	“Class, let’s practice how to provide specific and meaningful feedback to your classmates’ book reviews. Here’s one

	learning behaviors, and culturally varied coping skills.	idea. Who has a different idea?"
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek first to understand how students' worldviews and values can be influenced by their sociocultural backgrounds and lived experiences. • Create opportunities for students to hone self-management skills 	<p>"Everyone, here's today's reading topic. Please take a few minutes to write down your goals. How does your family usually set goals? (or what goals are important to people in your community?)"</p>
Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage students in active listening through individual and group interactions. • Encourage students to label emotions, validate their feelings, and embrace true belongings. 	<p>"Class, as I walk around the room now, I'm really interested in knowing what you think about this topic. If this topic (or book) has words or feelings, what would they be saying to you now?"</p>
Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a trusting relationship with students by advocating for and empowering them with a strength-based approach. 	<p>"I trust everyone will be able to make the best use of time today. Now, please identify your strengths in a group setting, and listen to your groupmates when they identify theirs. Then, show your team how you can best help with the project."</p>
Unite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid overgeneralization, minimization, or stereotypical views of cultural norms and behaviors. • Foster students' collaborative learning that extends their critical thinking of cultural connections and social interactions. 	<p>"Class, have you seen any stereotypes or biases portrayed in this book/video? How do you think a stereotype might affect our relationship with</p>

		others? Please write down some specific examples.”
Reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically reflect on current teaching and learning practices to enhance cultural responsiveness • Allow both educators and students expand their knowledge constructions and challenge themselves to co-construct equitable classroom environments 	“Class, that was a challenging question for me, and this was how I approached it (model positive self-talk or adaptive coping). How have you responded to a difficult situation? What was helpful?”
Empathize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the challenge of language acquisition can be compounded by structural factors. Every EL has a distinct linguistic repertoire and their home languages can be a source of creative thinking and expression. 	<p>“How is everything going? Are you feeling [insert emotions]? What is the rose, the thorn, and the bud for you this week? How can I help?”</p> <p>“Please feel free to express your feelings and thoughts in any language, or using pictures or your own drawing...”</p>

CULTURE – The New Pedagogical Approach

Care. Teachers who care about what their students learn most likely care about how their students perceive learning. Testing and assessments are necessary when the outcomes can benefit students’ intellectual development and teachers’ instructional pedagogies. However, schooling does not just consist of learning and teaching core academic subjects. Students also learn social norms and expectations through interacting

with others in school. Engaging students in learning and sustaining their love of learning in the educational system are critical. However, cultural mismatches and persistent gaps that exist between mainstream teaching and instructional practices for ELs can be detrimental for the integration of culturally responsive SEL and literacy skills. Many ELs, who are newcomers, face daunting struggles such as being alienated from curriculum at school, anxiety about language barriers, and facing racial discrimination (Rishel & Miller, 2017). In the U.S., most ELA classroom activities, such as pair work, group discussions, project presentations, and daily check-in exercises, assume that children have a prior understanding of the target language and local cultures (e.g., sports and food choices). For ELs who have not yet attained high oral and reading fluency skills in English, their needs for making connections to classroom norms are easily overlooked.

In a study of effective literacy teachers, some similarities among teachers were found, including recognizing ELs' linguistic resources (e.g., their home language) as learning potentials, prioritizing interactive learning through genuine dialogue with students, and incorporating students' cultural experiences (Kaya, 2014). A literacy study (McElvain, 2010) showed positive results in EL participants' reading self-efficacy, reading comprehension, motivation, and confidence by implementing interventions that utilized strategies such as providing students with substantial background knowledge and relevant schemata for understanding texts and interacting with others in a non-threatening atmosphere (e.g., promoting inquiry-based learning and encouraging realistic expectations about accuracy). Teachers who are more conscientious about caring for their students and making their teaching captivating are believed to have positive impacts on students' learning efforts and outcomes (Ginsberg, 2015). Beliefs and expectations of

teachers on their students have a noteworthy influence on students' self-awareness, self-efficacy, and personal and social identities. Teachers should model authentic and constructive feedback and give specific praises that underscore the others' diligence, cultural and linguistic assets, honesty and integrity, and ability to face challenges with a growth mindset.

Understand. Knowing the worldviews and self-concepts of ELs provides valuable insights that can be used by teachers to identify their students' social-emotional needs and to implement appropriate interventions that connect their prior learning experiences to the current school community. The cultural and social implications of personality may affect students' views of themselves. Understanding how the pedagogical philosophies are different among school systems in various cultures can make literacy instruction more accessible for ELs as students are invited to an inclusive learning environment that sustains their cultural preferences.

The cultural orientation of collectivism-individualism and power distance might shape students' unique perceptions of schooling. From a cultural psychology perspective, individualistic societies place a higher value on self-reliance, personal attributes, and independence, whereas collectivist cultures emphasize interdependence, group goals, and the importance of community (Cortina et al., 2017). On the Cultural Dimensions Index (Hofstede et al., 2010) U.S. tends to score higher on the individualist culture, whereas many other Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and African countries tend to score higher on the collectivist dimension. Power distance refers to the perception of hierarchy and power distribution from the members of the lower strata (Hofstede et al., 2010). Students in high power-distant cultures (e.g., Arab countries, Malaysia, Guatemala, Panama, the

Philippines, etc.) are more teacher-centered; thus, they are less likely to express their individual viewpoints or preferences (Hofstede et al., 2010). These findings suggest that children raised in families and societies from one spectrum of the cultural dimension may not readily relate to or understand their classmates who grew up in a different cultural context.

Teachers in literacy classrooms could demonstrate the importance of both individual and collective agency by helping ELs reflect on their unique identities and leverage their personal efforts to accomplish collective goals in class activities. Social language is as important as academic language in school settings. ELs may not automatically acquire social cues such as personal space and non-verbal expressions (e.g., making eye contact and gestures to indicate needs). Collaborative learning activities, however, are primarily based on a communicative approach that emphasizes planning and organizational skills, interacting socially with others, and being motivated and having the courage to cooperate. ELs who are not aware of the use of social language may face difficulties in exchanging ideas. Given that communicating in English for social and instructional purposes is one of the standards of K–12 English language proficiency, it is essential to provide students with opportunities to exhibit self-management skills (e.g., how to set and evaluate their goals, manage time, and self-monitor behaviors.)

Listen. ELs' perspectives on their own learning experiences are significant assets for improving teacher-student relationships and classroom instruction. Student voice should be valued and respected so that students could feel more connected to their schools and involved in active learning. Exploring social–emotional topics in literature provides an opportunity for students and educators to identify different social norms and

emotion expressions. While culturally responsive SEL instruction provides space for ELs to find their identities and values, teachers must be able to allow different voices to be heard (e.g., helping students recognize strengths in themselves and others, expressing compassion and gratitude, and validating others' feelings). It is better to initiate a transparent conversation by acknowledging students' negative feelings, rather than immediately replacing those feelings with positive ones. Active listening is a prerequisite to mutual understanding and deeper conversation. Without meaningful interactions and responsive instruction, students may become frustrated and discouraged to learn. Shim and Shur (2018) cited a student's struggle in ESL class as "they (teachers) don't give me enough time to read and write down things and when I tell them that I need more time, they don't even listen" (p. 26).

Since a large part of SEL skills comes from listening and understanding, being open to students' perspectives is a key element of SEL instruction. Intentionally listening to ELs may help teachers better identify which specific SEL skills their students need to master. Furthermore, teachers in English reading instruction could provide interactive scaffolds for emergent ELs to engage in sense-making and higher-order skills through discussions and extended dialogues (Johnson, 2019). Literacy research findings (Leighton et al., 2019) also supported that young ELs significantly increased their engagement in group discussions and ability to respond to complex tests in speaking and writing when their teacher adopted certain approaches such as linking students' responses and building upon them, fostering students' critical analysis through text-based group discussions, and encouraging students to mark personal connections to support their

perspectives on the topics. To do this, teachers need to have active listening skills to gauge and highlight the ideas of students.

Trust. There have been fewer studies focused on the factors affecting learning environments and social circumstances, which contribute to ELs' struggles with inequality (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017). Students of color are frequently labeled as non-native speakers of English, disadvantaged learners, and "at-risk" students. Very often ELs' difficulties in literacy skills are misinterpreted as the interference of home language and English acquisition. Many ELs share the gripping belief that their native language is inferior, and they think that their linguistic background inhibits their progress in English literacy. Some teachers lower academic expectations for ELs or devalue multilingual resources by prescribing English as the only language used in class. Rizzuto (2017) found that most mainstream teacher participants held negative perceptions about their ELs and showed a knowledge gap in their literacy instructional practices for EL children. Consequently, some teachers chose to provide ELs with a superficial curriculum and assign those students to segregated groups in class. In this case, ELs' social capital and funds of knowledge are not recognized to make meaningful contributions to literacy instruction. However, Geva and Massey-Garrison (2012) in their experiment concluded that elementary ELs who received sufficient instruction of the societal language did not differ from their monolingual classmates on cognitive and decoding skills of English language tasks, except for vocabulary.

Teachers' lack of trust may impact ELs' academic engagement in literacy activities. As Norton (2010) wrote, "literacy is not only about reading and writing, but also about relationships between text and reader, student and teachers, classroom and

community, in local, regional, and transnational sites” (p. 10). In classrooms, engagement is strongly influenced by the learning context, purpose of the activity, and social interactions with peers and teachers. Promoting teamwork and collaborative problem-solving opens doors to mutual understanding and emotional security. Sense of belonging to a school and self-efficacy can be evidence of trust among students and teachers. A recent study (Amemiya et al., 2020) reported that adolescents’ trust in teachers and school practices is deemed as a predominant predictor for their classroom behavioral engagement. Fredricks and Warriner (2016) highlighted that linguistic hierarchies may lead to a social stigma that devalues EL youth’s self-image and confidence in language acquisition. A trust-based teacher-student relationship is fostered by promises, consistent interactions, and authentic feelings. SEL competencies, such as seeking or offering support, showing empathy, and using constructive coping skills, can easily be blended in literature writing prompts that facilitate ELs to assert themselves and optimize their social and linguistic capacity.

Unite. Learning challenges due to one’s culture, language, gender, race, or socioeconomic status are not reasons for postponing quality and comprehensible ELA classroom activities. ELs are a highly heterogeneous group. Even though students may come from similar cultural backgrounds, it does not mean they share identical or singular life experiences and circumstances. Classroom instruction should engage students in acknowledging within group differences and confronting the “us versus them” mentality. Neither overrepresenting students’ linguistic and cultural identities nor denying those identities can help school-aged children and youth thrive in schooling.

Hammond (2015) explained that there are three levels of culture. Surface culture refers to observable patterns that generate low emotional impact on trust, such as stories, talk styles, and language. Overemphasizing surface cultures (e.g., festivals, holidays, arts and music, and foods) may at best mask the unique identity and authentic nature of individual students. At worst, false assumption or over-simplification of stereotyped cultural and racial traits (e.g., Asian students are good at math) may perpetuate prejudice and mislead generations. Shallow culture refers to social interactions, norms, and nonverbal communication, such as concepts of time, ways of coping with emotions, and pace of work. Finally, deep culture refers to group values and beliefs that guide ethics, spirituality, concepts of self, and decision-making.

As noted earlier, deep culture can be hidden but powerful in shaping one's perceptions, preferences, and social interactions with others. When weaving SEL topics into literacy classrooms, teachers can unleash new opportunities to utilize collaborative learning and small group discussions that highlight connections to students' life and their own cultural heritages. A systematic review (Piazza et al., 2015) of culturally responsive literacy practices showed that effective strategies serving special education students and ELs tended to fall under five key areas: dialogue, collaboration, visual representation, explicit instruction, and inquiry. However, collaborative learning cannot happen if a learner does not feel connected. Findings from an experimental study (Gehlbach et al., 2016) in a high school demonstrated that teachers perceived better relationships with students when they had similar interests, personality traits, hobbies, attitudes, and backgrounds. Another large-scale study (Mikami et al., 2017) underscored that peer relatedness was positively correlated with high school students' classroom behavioral

engagement and their test scores. These findings support that students' sense of connectedness to their schools can have a significant influence on their academic performance and persistence.

Reflect. Emergent ELs can be easily misled by assignment of independent reading without scaffolding, practicing only basic skills, choosing overly simplistic reading contents, and receiving superficial feedback. A school-based study (Garcia et al., 2019) showed that systematic disparities exist in teachers' assessment of children's higher-order cognitive skills. According to the findings, teachers' perceptions were biased by students' gender, ethnic identity, and English language proficiency; for example, teachers tended to perceive students with limited English proficiency to be less competent in their problem solving and goal-directed behaviors than their English-dominant counterparts.

Using critical self-reflection, teachers can challenge themselves to examine their own biases, expand their culture-specific knowledge constructions, and consider how to integrate culturally informed pedagogical practices and strategies in their classrooms. The more reflective teachers are, the more likely they are to step outside of their comfort zones and develop purposeful and inclusive practices that could benefit students from diverse backgrounds.

Although reflective teaching has long been discussed in literacy instruction, there is very little research on the role of educators' emotion in their self-reflection on their language teaching experiences. Critical reflection is not only cognitive-based but is inextricably connected with one's emotion-related experiences. Research has found that self- and collaborative reflection could promote English language teachers' capacity for

processing and coping with emotionally challenging situations in their everyday teaching (Gkonou & Miller, 2020). This might be because reflection, whether in group or individual format, fosters teachers' understanding of their own and others' emotions and how they can respond to those emotions.

In recent years, the constructs of SEL competencies have shifted from personally responsible to transformative (Jagers et al., 2019). For instance, the transformative approach suggested that SEL skills should move from emotion-focused coping to “critical self-analysis, problem-focused coping, and cultural humility” (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 166). Transformative SEL sheds light on the ways of fostering connections to students' own lived experiences and those of others to facilitate critical thinking. Students and educators of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds can practice transformative SEL skills by learning about their individual capacity and collective well-being. Along with reflecting on academic content, students can also evaluate their learning performance and identify solutions to their learning challenges through individual or group reflection in a supportive social and emotional environment. In sum, collaborative and transformative SEL is not only for promoting students' self-awareness, but for enhancing teachers' critical self-reflection, cultural awareness, and emotional resilience as well.

Empathize. Empathy is well recognized as a vital element in building relationships with ELs. Language teachers may not directly teach empathy, but they should always be aware of students' negative feelings and confusion about acquiring a new language. For immigrant ELs, the anxiety of communicating in an unfamiliar language can be compounded by feelings of not belonging and vulnerability to being ridiculed or bullied (Dovchin, 2021). Understanding the language backgrounds and needs

of students is imperative to successful literacy instruction. Regarding language acquisition strategies, an increasingly prevalent trend of thinking has resulted in the translanguaging paradigm that specifically acknowledges the sociolinguistic assets of linguistic minority students. The translanguaging approach offers a new lens through which literacy teachers affirm and sustain their ELs' multilingual skills. This is because not all research-based literacy practices can be generalized to meet the educational needs of students whose families speak another language than English. Languages are no longer conceptualized as separate linguistic systems, so ELs can demonstrate content learning without being constrained by their use of languages. As such, ELs can practice using their dynamic linguistic repertoire that contains all the languages they are familiar with to understand meanings or make sense of the learning process.

García and Kleifgen (2019) stated that “translanguaging literacy acts produce an intensity of emotion, feeling, and meaning that is the spark for imagination, creativity, criticality, and especially freedom for multilingual learners to act in a socially just space and partake of a rich education” (pp. 567–577). It is not mandatory for literacy teachers to be bilingual or multilingual in order to understand ELs. Teachers should realize that every EL has a distinct linguistic repertoire and recognize that ELs' home language can serve as a valuable resource for engaging in content learning in literacy classrooms. By incorporating SEL topics such as having students reflect on their own ways of self-care and promoting wellness, and problem recognition and problem solving, teachers can facilitate students' curiosity, creativity, and open-mindedness to using their own languages and expressions.

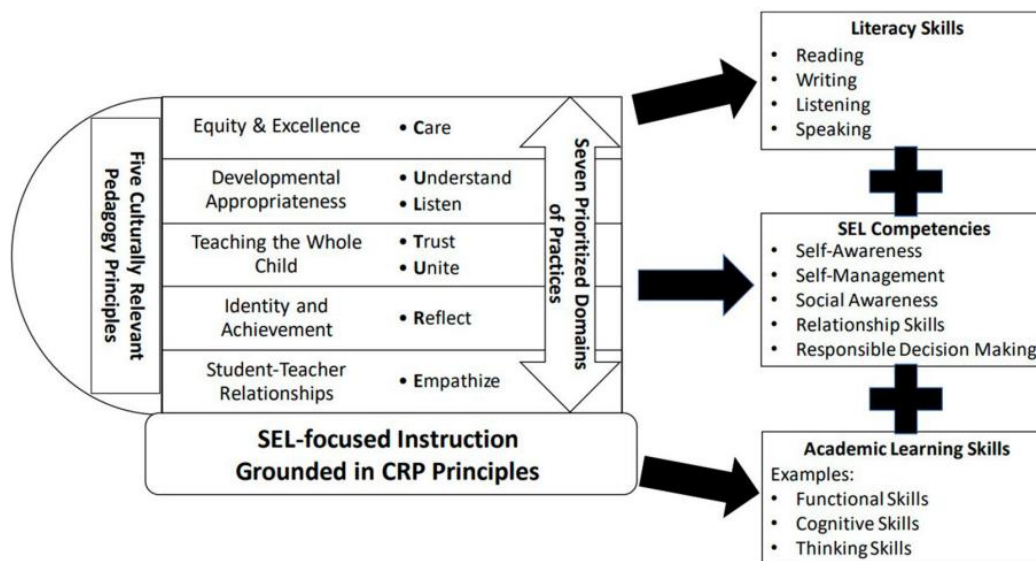
Concluding Thoughts and Future Directions

We want to offer our own reflection on the teaching of SEL and some suggestions for future research and professional development. While content specific, standalone SEL interventions have largely been shown as effective and associated with improved student learning outcomes, there is little knowledge about how to infuse SEL into the regular academic curriculum, or how effective SEL programming has been among ELs or across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. We acknowledge that the construct of social emotional competency is fluid, socially constructed, and must be understood and taught in a culturally relevant context. Thus, successful implementation of SEL interventions relies not only on specific content or materials, but also on educators' ability to grasp and attend to the formal and informal ways (e.g., structured curriculum, out-of-school practice) in which SEL is incorporated into the school and home cultures of students.

Research has examined ways in which culturally responsive teaching practices and explicit SEL instruction mutually reinforce one another to promote students' social-emotional development and academic performance (e.g., Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Our proposed pedagogical approach, CULTURE, is an extension of the CRT framework for culturally responsive teaching and grounded in the notion that SEL can be leveraged as a tool for systemic change and improvement. In particular, literacy classrooms framed with an equity lens can play a pivotal role in shaping students to become critically reflective, deeply empathetic, and socially responsible individuals. ELs should not be viewed as passive recipients of remedial teaching that is focused on addressing their lack of language skills or perceived problematic behaviors. Rather, ELs should be invited to actively reflect on and integrate

their worldviews, lived experiences, values, identities, strengths, and cultural assets into various aspects of their literacy development. When students feel valued and affirmed, they are more likely to take ownership of their academic and social–emotional learning, develop a sense of agency, and become empowered to contribute to their schools and communities.

For professional development, Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) provided clear arguments for the systemic integration of SEL and CRT in teacher preparation. Through case studies, discussion of required reading (e.g., Hammond, 2015), a careful revision of curriculum and instructional methods, and ongoing discussion and reflection on one’s own work, Donahue-Keegan and colleagues wove in a SEL/CRT lens in all aspects of their teacher preparation program. In terms of future research, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be employed to examine the integration of CULTURE pedagogical practices in English Language classrooms and their effect on students’ development of the core SEL competencies. For example, an observation checklist can be developed to record teachers’ use of CULTURE practices in their everyday classroom instruction to identify strengths and gaps in knowledge or readiness to implement SEL skill instruction. Teachers’ reflective journals, and focus group interviews with various stakeholders (e.g., teachers, staff, parents, students) could capture their subjective experiences and perceptions of the benefits and challenges in integrating SEL and CRT at the classroom and school levels. Finally, a longitudinal design and time series analysis (see Figure 1) may help researchers gain insights into the associations between the CULTURE practices and improved academic outcomes, literacy skills, and SEL competencies.

Figure 1*The CULTURE Pedagogical Approach*

Note. This figure demonstrates the CULTURE Pedagogical Approach that is integrated with culturally responsive teaching and social emotional learning instruction in English Language classrooms to enhance students' literacy skills, SEL competencies and other academic outcomes.

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Chapter 4: Synthesis and Conclusion

Cultural awareness and social–emotional competencies are critical to learners’ additional language acquisition because the development of language proficiency is fostered through interactions in different cultural and linguistic contexts (Kim, 2020). With the notion of sustaining equity and social justice in education, merely teaching discrete and evidence-based literacy skills is not an effective approach to addressing the perpetual dilemma: social and educational inequity. Although schools are taking steps to tackle achievement gaps and issues related to students’ social class and ethnic/racial backgrounds, the focus on narrowing the gaps by simply increasing the rigor of academic standards and assessment may be detracting from efforts to provide alternative opportunities for a greater diversity of cultural and linguistic resources that could enrich students’ academic learning and promote well-being.

As of the 21st century, the world is rapidly changing and is connected faster than ever before due to advances in technology (Friedman, 2005). The need for interdisciplinary studies in education is on the rise to advance pedagogies and frameworks through the lens of diversity and inclusivity. The studies in Chapter 3 were built on interdisciplinary knowledge including literacy, psychology, and multicultural education. This synthesis chapter is organized into five parts that provide a critical analysis of the findings from each study and a summary of the implications and future directions of the studies. The five parts include (a) overall findings of the studies, (b) significance of the studies, (c) implications for practice, (d) future research, and (e) a conclusion.

Overall Findings

The empirical study titled *Hidden voices: How Chinese immigrant educators implement culturally inclusive practices in U.S. classrooms* (Lau & Gritter, 2022) explores the concept of culturally inclusive practice in the broader context of Asian American educators in the United States. Specifically, the discussion focuses on the cross-cultural academic learning and teaching experiences of Chinese immigrant educators. The findings highlight the unique assets and challenges immigrant teachers bring to teaching in the U.S. educational system. Given their cross-national educational backgrounds, the three teacher participants in the study were more inclined to gain a deeper understanding of their students as individuals and colearn cultural topics with students. Furthermore, they were more attuned to the bicultural or multicultural tensions due to their motivation to explore and understand the cultural dynamics in teaching and learning in different cultural contexts. They ubiquitously conveyed the concept of building harmonious relationships through culturally inclusive practices, while they reported marked differences in teacher training and student population between China and the United States. They all had to rely significantly on their practicum, mentorship support, and/or on-site teaching to better understand U.S. school expectations and practices, and they realized students' learning styles were far more diverse and individualized.

In the second article titled *Empowering English learners in the classroom through culturally responsive social–emotional teaching practices* (Lau & Shea, 2022), the overarching theme from this study was two-pronged: (a) to expand the social–emotional learning (SEL) literature through the lens of culturally responsive practices and (b) to

suggest prioritized pedagogical strategies that support the integration of SEL in teaching literacy skills. The seven prioritized domains (i.e., care, understand, listen, trust, unite, reflect, and empathize) of the CULTURE approach, grounded in theories of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), highlight the pedagogical practices that accentuate the need to make culturally responsive SEL visible for multilingual learners (MLs) and to better support their learning in everyday literacy classrooms.

Significance of Studies

The two studies are built on assets-based theories and frameworks, with a shared goal to promote equitable practices in literacy instruction for MLs. It is possible to realize equity in classrooms when teachers capitalize on the cultural and linguistic knowledge of students and to foster a sense of belonging among the learning communities where everyone is empowered with their own identities to construct knowledge. Valuing students' identities allows students to see themselves in the curriculum. Both studies emphasized the need to include more diverse voices (e.g., educators of immigration) and explored varied and interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches (e.g., culturally responsive SEL) in future research related to teacher education and literacy.

The findings in my previous research identified that promoting English language learners' (ELLs) social–emotional competencies is a practical way to foster their learning capacity and acknowledge their cultural and linguistic identities (Lau & Shea, 2022). In the CULTURE model, the seven domains of the pedagogical approach are designed to help language teachers meet the academic and socioemotional needs of their students simultaneously. Based on my study, I urge further empirical research to shed light on the integration of SEL and CRT as a pedagogical approach to leverage the prior knowledge

and diverse backgrounds of students through literacy instruction. On a daily basis, learners' emotions play a critical role in their linguistic expressions and lived experiences. There has been ample evidence that emotions can significantly influence human behaviors and cognitive processes (Goleman, 1995; Immordino-Yang, 2007). In educational settings, a student's irrational reactions and emotional outbursts may have disruptive impacts on the learning experience of the whole class. Previous research has proposed the use of mindfulness and emotion regulation strategies such as deep breathing exercises to help students regulate their strong emotions such as anger, sadness and annoyance. There is an upsurge of stand-alone programs that focus on teaching discrete SEL skills such as emotional awareness and self-regulation in the United States. In contrast, I argued in my previous research that SEL should be seen as an integrative approach rather than a remedial tool or a panacea to fix students' emotional problems. That said, SEL competencies (e.g., empathy, compassion, taking others' perspectives, relationship skills) could be explicitly practiced and discussed as an integral part of the literacy curriculum that could help MLs capitalize their linguistic and cultural assets to express thoughts and communicate with others.

In addition to my previous argument, I also contend the simplistic notion of categorizing emotions into positive/good and negative/bad in SEL fails to consider the cultural variations in how emotions are expressed and experienced. The dichotomy of emotions (i.e., desirable vs. undesirable) may overgeneralize the coping strategies that are prevalent in Western cultural perspectives and overlook other cultural beliefs that emotions are fluid, transient, and oftentimes mixed. Researchers (e.g., De Vaus et al., 2017) have shown that cultural differences existed in coping with negative emotions. In

Western culture, negative emotions are more likely to be viewed as hindrances and threats; in many East Asian countries, negative and positive emotions are often regarded as a co-occurrence.

Emotions have more nuances when expressed in different languages and defined in different cultural contexts. In a scientific study of emotional concepts across languages (Jackson et al., 2019), terms like love have varying sentiments, indicating emotions are influenced by cultures in different ways, and they are interpreted and understood differently through language. To make the case, I highlighted in both studies (Lau & Gritter, 2022; Lau & Shea, 2022) that students may express different ways of thinking when comparing their experiences to those of other cultures and attach different meanings to emotional expressions due to their own linguistic backgrounds. The results from both studies have important implications and future directions for enhancing the literature on the integration of CRT and SEL to better support multilingual students' well-being and literacy development.

Implications for Practice

The study on culturally responsive practices of Chinese immigrant educators (Lau & Gritter, 2022) has implications for teacher education programs, such as devising mentoring support that explicitly address topics related to racial identity, language, and cultural competence of mentors and mentees. In this model, mentorship shifts from a vertical relationship where mentors act an authoritative role in providing feedback on mentees to a more horizontal one in which mentors and mentees are regarded as a collaborative team to codevelop their cultural competence and culturally responsive practices. A potential way to provide effective mentoring is to create a safe and trusting

space where teacher candidates and novice teachers feel affirmed in their identities and supported to leverage their identity assets (e.g., multilingual skills and cultural competence) to work in a myriad of classrooms and schools.

In addition, the study (Lau & Gritter, 2022) spotlighted cultural relevance in teacher development and classroom instruction. For example, the AsianCrit framework was used to account for racialized experiences of subgroups of Asian American teachers (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). The critical analysis of culturally inclusive pedagogies can potentially support language teacher educators, teacher candidates, and in-service teachers in innovating curriculum for literacy instruction and enriching narratives for the issues of identity and agency.

In the Lau and Shea (2022) study, the CULTURE pedagogical approach is in alignment with the theories of CRT and the practices of SEL to promote equity and excellence in classroom learning for ELLs. In the field of English language teaching, this approach can be integrated with teacher education and training programs to equip teachers with the knowledge of SEL and cultural competence and support their literacy instruction in a way that ELLs' social-emotional competencies can be developed in tandem with their language skills. For example, teacher preparation courses can include topics related to emotions, well-being, and language teacher identity development in English language teaching (Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2020) could be introduced to guide preservice teachers through incorporating SEL activities in the English language classroom and to support teachers in deepening their understanding of how emotions shape learning and teaching across cultural contexts. Several other projects on the topic of multicultural literature in schools, such as retrospective reflections about instructional

activities and collaborative peer work among preservice teachers and host teachers (Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2021), could also be implemented to support learners with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Another implication is to further examine how teachers who possess cross-cultural experiences in studying and teaching in different educational systems view and implement concepts such as CRT and SEL. The ability to navigate a mixture of cultures in classrooms is not only relevant to educators of color but is also critical for every educator who aspires to teach languages and social–emotional skills through an equity lens.

Future Research

Findings from both studies expand the knowledge base of literacy practices for multilingual learners. I include three suggestions for future interdisciplinary research to further explore the implementation of SEL and CRT practices.

Observational Studies in Diverse Classrooms

Class observations can be an effective way to grasp an understanding of how teachers' practices are in alignment with theories and research. Further studies that examine the implementation of the CULTURE approach (Lau & Shea, 2022) in classrooms can help researchers fill in gaps in promoting culturally responsive SEL practices. More observational studies across varied contexts of literacy instruction (e.g., reading, speaking, writing) and backgrounds of students (e.g., preK–12 education vs. higher education) are recommended to investigate how the seven domains of the CULTURE approach are applied in real life. Additionally, future observational studies on SEL practices should consider the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participant

populations to depict more culturally specific findings that potentially help educators design more effective strategies to support MLs, especially those who come from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Language Choice in Qualitative Studies

It is vital to consider how researchers can provide a safe and welcoming space for participants from different cultural backgrounds to freely engage in storytelling and narratives without feeling hesitant or discouraged in sharing their cultural and linguistic experiences. The interview findings from the first study (Lau & Gritter, 2022) demonstrated that teacher participants were more open and provide more detailed examples when given the options to use whatever languages they felt most comfortable. This finding highlights the need for more planning to examine the effect of language choice in conducting qualitative research on multilingual learners. To enhance the quality of qualitative research interviews with multilingual students, future studies could examine the nuances of language choice in CRT and SEL practices. For instance, researchers can analyze comparable data collected from different types of language programs, such as dual language programs and newcomer programs, to gain deeper insights into how language choice affects the quality of data collection. By comparing data collected from these different programs, researchers can identify patterns and differences in the way that MLs engage with and express themselves in different language contexts. This kind of data analysis can deepen the understanding of the experiences of MLs and educators and inform the development of more effective research methods on CRT and SEL.

Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to investigate the effectiveness of culturally diverse teams in researching and teaching CRT and SEL practices. For example, Jang (2017) demonstrated multicultural individuals are either (a) cultural outsiders whose cultural background does not overlap with any other members of the team or (b) cultural insiders whose cultural background does overlap with other team members. This idea contributed to enhancing the team's creative performance by integrating or eliciting knowledge from different cultures in collaboration with monocultural members. This model of "cultural brokerage" (Jang, 2017, p. 993) could be replicated and further examined in educational settings to explore its potential benefits in promoting CRT and SEL practices.

Curriculum Innovation in Teacher Education Programs

This dissertation emphasizes the goals of integrating CRT and SEL practices in classrooms to promote equity and inclusive learning environments. Nonetheless, for these goals to be achieved, it is crucial for teacher educators to make a concerted effort to apply the concepts and theories of culturally responsive SEL into their teaching. To bring about transformative changes, future studies should focus on curriculum innovation in training new generations of equity-centered teachers. To this end, further research is necessary to critically analyze how teacher educators' curriculum design (e.g., introducing multicultural literature and discussing well-being and social-emotional topics) can effectively support teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds in teaching. Moreover, analysis should delve into addressing potential barriers teacher education programs face in curriculum innovation and providing practical ways that teacher candidates of color can relate to promote their cultural and linguistic identity in their instruction. By pursuing

these avenues of research, teacher educators can better equip future teachers with effective tools to foster a more equitable learning environment for all students.

Conclusion

The issues such as discrimination, racial profiling, and microaggressions have long been disproportionately affecting students from historically marginalized communities in U.S. schools because their ethnic identities and linguistic backgrounds are often either overlooked or misrepresented from Eurocentric ideologies (Steketee et al., 2021; Sue et al., 2007). It was the purpose of this dissertation to explore the possibilities for integrating CRT and SEL in literacy instruction for linguistically diverse students and to amplify the voice of teachers who are striving to make curriculum delivery relevant and inclusive to students. Findings consolidated from the two publications pointed out that students' identities and social-emotional competencies are essential to how effectively they learn.

Unlike academic skills that can be practiced independently, social-emotional and cultural competencies need time and relationships to develop in a student. In language learning, students can cultivate trusting relationships while developing social-emotional skills through ample opportunities. These opportunities can take the form of collaborative projects, group discussions, and other activities that enable students to learn how to interact with others in a positive way and foster an environment of trust among their peers. A teacher's choice to empower students to be truthful and open about themselves and others can have a transformative impact on tackling equity issues in education. This impact can help pave the way toward a more just and authentic learning environment. Good teaching comes along with ample knowledge of content areas, foundational skill

instruction, and instructional strategies; impactful teaching takes place when students feel connected and seen through their learning experiences with others.

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