

Chapter 5

Creating Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Classroom Communities in Early Childhood Language Immersion Schools

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examined the development of a classroom community through a case study of a kindergarten teacher in a Spanish language immersion school. Case study data includes observational field notes, classroom artifacts, informal conversations, and interviews with an immersion kindergarten classroom teacher. Additionally, interviews with the two administrators from the Spanish and French immersion schools (networking schools) were collected and analyzed to learn about their perspectives regarding culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices and their commitment to encouraging the creation of classroom communities within their schools. The results revealed both the administrators and the case teacher in the kindergarten classroom supported practices of drawing from their own and students' cultural identities and resources to create a culturally responsive learning and social environment, in partnership with students and families. Recommendations for future studies on diverse early childhood settings are discussed in regards to teacher preparation and policy enactment.

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INTRODUCTION

Language immersion schools (LIS) in the United States (US) and across international settings afford learners opportunities for foreign language learning through at least 50% of content material instruction in the “immersion language” (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011). In addition to the language learning benefits, LIS embrace diverse cultural perspectives embodied in the worldviews of the teachers and administrators who are usually native speakers and were born in foreign countries. These content/pedagogical and cultural assets could also bring challenges for the immigrant faculty, given, for example, the short period of time of adaptation to a new culture, to new teaching and classroom management practices, and/or to new school culture and policies in creating classroom community. Students’ diverse backgrounds also add to the classroom complexities but along with the teachers’ diverse backgrounds they could also be used as assets in the classroom and school community (Ballenger, 1992; Rogoff, 2003; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Slapac & Kim, 2014).

As immigrants ourselves (Alina was born in Romania and Sujin was born in South Korea), we strongly believe that culture plays a very important role in fostering relationships and creating classroom communities (Slapac & Kim, 2014). Therefore, although historically, classroom management has been viewed as teacher-centered, where discipline was approached reactively by teachers through consequences in a controlling, authoritarian, and inflexible environment, we argue for a constructivist, learner-centered approach to classroom management, perceived as a dynamic process, responsive to students’ individual cultures, needs, strengths, and where students are seen as active participants in the classroom organization (Bloom, 2009). Despite the fact that there is limited body of research on the connection between classroom management and language classrooms (Curran, 2003; Fortune, 2011; Pauls, 2014; Preciado et al., 2009; Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Wright, 2005), we are focusing on how foreign-born teachers in a language immersion context create culturally responsive classroom communities.

We agree with Bloom (2009), Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) and Weinstein (2003) that culture impacts both teachers and students while shaping the overall classroom culture. Teachers need to use their students’ cultural backgrounds and their own, and be aware of the influences of culture such as “communication styles, social behaviors, approaches to learning, values, and motivation” (Bloom, 2009, p.112) to be able “to create an inclusive, supportive, and caring environment” (Weinstein, 2003, p. 267). The school culture, practices and policies, and the child rearing values also impact the choices in approaches to classroom management made by teachers. In LIS classrooms, culture plays even more complex roles. Both the teachers who are native speakers of the target language and students from diverse cultural backgrounds make choices and responses based on their different cultural and linguistic upbringings, creating a unique cross-cultural and intercultural classroom space. Rather than disparate, reified traits of different groups, culture is an ongoing process of social construction (Kim & Slapac, 2015), defined as “a set of resources for action, as a narration shared, contested, and negotiated” (Mantovani, 2012, p. 22).

This study draws on sociocultural (Lemke, 2001) and constructivist (Bloom, 2009; Gregory, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Windschitl, 1999) approaches to the important role of cross-cultural competency and classroom community in addressing the unique challenges of LIS learning communities, and to look both within and beyond the classroom context. The main purposes of the study were: a) to identify two administrators’ perspective from interview data regarding culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices and their commitment to encourage the creation of classroom communities; and b) to have a closer look, through a case study approach, at how a kindergarten teacher in the Spanish Im-

mersion Elementary School (SIES) developed and created his own classroom culture and community within the school.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Despite the growing need in the US for multilingual education and new teaching force in LIS classrooms, there is scarce research on the role of teachers' cultural backgrounds in shaping LIS classroom communities. Even less research exists that specifically looked at the experiences of the teachers who were born and educated abroad, carrying divergent cultural, institutional, and pedagogical practices and identities to US classrooms (e.g., Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Arzubagi & Adair, 2009; Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2004). In addition, recruitment of bilingual teachers has been an ongoing challenge for LIS due to the scarcity of qualified bilingual teaching force (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Many bilingual teachers, whether locally grown or foreign-born, are insufficiently trained in teaching for LIS students (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). There is also little time for training, as most teachers hired from abroad arrive from their home countries just a few weeks before school starts. Foreign-born teachers in LIS are further challenged to work with students from diverse racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds without in-depth understanding of how such diverse factors, combined, challenge their work as bilingual teachers in the US (Valdés, 2002). Only a small body of research addressed challenges in creating classroom communities by looking at how teachers' and students' cultural backgrounds interact to shape the LIS classroom culture (e.g., Slapac & Dorner, 2013; Walker & Tedick, 2000). In this section, we identify challenges that foreign-born teachers in general, including LIS teachers, face in creating culturally responsive classroom communities by reviewing related literature in two areas: negotiation and development of teaching cultures and cross-cultural competency, and creating classroom communities.

Negotiating Teaching Cultures and Developing Cross-Cultural Competency

Recent LIS research has primarily examined student achievement (e.g., Broner & Tedick, 2011; Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006; Dorner, 2011; Tedick & Wesely, 2015), LIS as portals to multiculturalism (Feinauer & Howard, 2014; Fortune & Tedick, 2008), related politics and policies (Dorner, 2011; Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011), and issues of equity (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). However, there are limited studies (e.g., Walker & Tedick, 2000; Zhou & Li, 2015) on how language immersion teachers negotiate sense-making of the US *teaching cultures* (Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Valdés, 2002) as they draw on their own teacher-preparation of what counts as effective teaching and learning practices. For example, Zhou and Li (2015) report on Chinese language teachers' challenges in negotiating between Chinese cultural expectations and the different demands in American classroom management, suggesting culturally responsive teacher preparation through professional development in the US context. Research into how teachers develop networked learning communities (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, Lieberman & Wood, 2002; Slapac & Dorner, 2013) that support their professional development, tell us that ironically, teachers often live isolated pedagogical lives (Ladson-Billings, 2001) with little or no systemic opportunities for purposeful collaboration that supports continual professional growth in cross-cultural competency.

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Cross-cultural competency “encompasses a wide range of possible diversities and differences and focuses on knowing oneself in a cultural context in order to relate to individual in different cultural contexts” (Lynch & Hanson, 2004, p. 43). From this perspective, we must concurrently attend to the perceptions and beliefs teachers and administrators have, ones developed in their native countries’ educational settings, and cultural demands placed on them within the new American schooling context. Teachers and administrators are members of particular “teaching cultures” (Anderson-Levitt, 2002). What comes to count as culturally-responsive teaching and learning in their native setting is one thing, and altogether different in the new setting, of a country foreign to these international teachers.

This *border crossing* (Anzaldúa, 2012) poses new cultural challenges for the teachers as they negotiate the demands of American teaching cultures. Borrowing the Bateson’s (1972) term, Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) illustrate the dilemma faced by new teachers of color as “double bind” when they are requested to simultaneously fill both the cultural and achievement gap in an era of high-stakes accountability. In other words, foreign-born teachers enter an educational space where the accountability policies restrict their abilities to activate and use their own and students’ cultural and linguistic resources, the main reason for their recruitment. Instead of accessing official opportunities to develop cross-cultural competency, these teachers encounter institutional constraints that require them to perform, although not fully endorsing, the new normative practices and professional identities in their immigrating country (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga, 2012; Arzubiaga & Adair, 2009; Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001; 2004). Policy expectations of LIS within an American educational context and the lack of opportunities for professional development also add challenges in developing further cross-cultural competency in the new settings.

Issues pertinent to diversity in an urban setting are another drawback for teachers’ cross-cultural competency building. LIS often attracts a diverse student population ranging in socio-economic status, and coming from diverse family, ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Kim & Dorner, in press). While immigrant teachers may share same cultural and linguistic backgrounds with some students, in turn providing them better educational opportunities (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolley, 2000), it is not tenable to relate to all differing students’ multi-leveled experiences to achieve culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Student diversity requires immersion teachers to develop culturally appropriate instructional practices within the classroom and to work cross-culturally with diverse families beyond the classroom; at the same time, as previously mentioned, they must also negotiate the disparity of teaching cultures between their native country and the US (Zhou & Li, 2016). Additionally, students in an immersion setting, where the language taught is not familiar to them, may develop problem behaviors as a way to avoid the difficult task of learning academic content through a new language (Slapac & Dorner, 2013). Consequently, classroom management poses an even greater challenge to these teachers.

Creating Classroom Communities

Classroom management has been a constant challenge for many teachers, especially in urban, diverse schools where students come from many different backgrounds (Brown, 2003; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Weiner, 2003). The demographic disparity in culture, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status between teachers – who are often White, monolingual – and students from diverse backgrounds is frequently blamed as the main reason for an ill-managed classroom (Milner & Tenore, 2010; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran, 2004). A range of different cultural attitudes, social skills, and languages that students bring to classrooms are often misaligned with the expectations of schools and teachers who feel overwhelmed when the traditional managerial interventions fail to yield

desired outcomes (McCarthy & Benally, 2003). Effective classroom management, thus, involves efforts to identify the different demographic, cultural contexts of the teacher and students, ultimately to address the mismatch and create an inclusive learning community (Brown, 2007).

Instead of applying standardized managerial skills, developing a community of care and respect is critical in culturally responsive classroom management. Such a classroom has a supportive physical environment, clear expectations for behavior, and effective teacher interventions for behavior problems (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Thus, research suggests that teachers understand and respond to the diverse perspectives and varying needs of their students who are English language learners (ELLs) (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Curran, 2003), students with disabilities (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Soodak, 2003), students from families of low socioeconomic status in an urban community (Brown, 2003; Milner, 2011; Milner & Tenore, 2010), or ethnic minority students (McCarthy & Benally, 2003). The next, more crucial, step is to activate students and teachers' cultural competency to create a successful learning community. Taking a communal approach is essential to build an inclusive, caring classroom culture, with intentional approaches to connecting to families and students in culturally responsive ways (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2011; Weinstein et al., 2003).

The communal approach is based on the constructivist stance that learning takes place as an ongoing sense-making process of students whose prior knowledge, cultural backgrounds and interpretive frames constantly interact with those of teachers and other external texts and contexts (Bloom, 2009; Gregory, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Windschitl, 1999). Constructivist classrooms often adopt the community of inquiry model (Gregory, 2003; Squire et al., 2003), highlighting students' agency to actively search and construct multiple perspectives for problem-solving and knowledge building. Rather than a collection of fragmentary instructional practices, a constructivist classroom values the co-constructed "culture" as the platform of learning where varied ideas, practices, and identities are acknowledged, applied, and reorganized to engender new understandings and interactional patterns (Windschitl, 1999).

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Research Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a network of independent, new tuition-free public, charter K-5 schools (pseudonyms of French and Spanish Immersion Elementary Schools—FIES and SIES) in an urban area in the Midwestern United States. Both schools opened in 2009 with similar requirements, such as, 100% instruction in the target language in all subject areas, including transitions, recess, and lunch time; a recent implementation of Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) model and an inquiry-based curriculum. In grades three through five, 80% of the instruction was in the target language (Spanish or French) and 20% was in English (a weekly 50-minute English Language Arts class). In addition, English Language Learners (ELLs) received English as a Second Language (ESL) weekly 90-minute support. English was also used in the after-school program. The curriculum followed the Primary Years Program (PYP), based on International Baccalaureate (IB) framework and included concepts and approaches to learning in the target language around transdisciplinary themes of global significance. Although the majority of the students came from monolingual, US-born, English-speaking homes, the overall student body (at the time of this study) was quite diverse, with 50% African-American, 35% White, 5% Hispanic, and

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10% multi-racial backgrounds. About 55% were qualified for free or reduced-price lunches. Each class had approximately 19 to 25 students.

The teacher body was unique, with a plethora of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. At the time of this study, for example, at the Spanish school (SIES) most ten lead teachers were natives of Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Spain, while at the French School (FIES), the nine foreign-born lead teachers came from France or Senegal. The rest of the lead teachers and some of the teacher assistants who were born in the United States (US) had also near-native fluency in Spanish or French. The principal at SIES was a native of Mexico, while the principal at FIES was a US born bilingual. Most foreign-born teachers were certified in their home countries. Teachers were encouraged to attend “professional development workshops, seminars, and conferences on language immersion education and constructivist models of teaching” (Slapac & Dorner, 2013, pp.257-258). Each lead teacher was partnered by administration with an assistant teacher for support in the classroom.

Sampling, Data Sources and Analysis

Institutional Review Board approval was secured and informed consents were signed by all participants before the process of data collection. In order to meet the goals and scope of this edited book, we decided to use and report only on the data that relates to early childhood. Specifically, in this qualitative research studies we conducted 60-minute interviews with each administrator at LIS (from Spanish and French school). In addition to our report on the two administrators’ perspectives, we present in this chapter a detailed case report on one experienced kindergarten teacher (“Miguel”, pseudonym) from the Spanish school for in-depth exploration of the teacher’s perception and practice in his classroom. We focus only on Miguel’s in-depth case description from the Spanish school for our early childhood focus, since our other participants from the French school served in second and third grade levels. Miguel was born in Mexico, and had over five years of teaching experience at SIES, and ten years in his home country prior to coming to the US. He completed his Bachelor degree in Mexico, and his Master’s in Elementary Education in the US. His classroom was quite diverse: twenty-four children, of which 16 African American, five Caucasians and three Hispanics.

To answer our research questions, we collected observational, artifact and inquiry data from Miguel. Observational data consisted of three in-depth classroom observations to have a better understanding of how a classroom community was being developed, taking into account the cultural assets of the respective teacher and his students. Each of the three classroom observations lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes. Field notes were constructed to describe the enacted teacher practices that we perceived to have contributed to creating a classroom community. Besides classroom observations and field notes, we videotaped the classroom sessions observed as secondary data sources to help us capture the details of the teacher’s interactions with students and for triangulation purposes. We also took photographs of the classroom environment that showcased the classroom culture and community, such as displays of student work on particular themes, cultural heritage of the student body, and weekly/monthly celebrations. Other displays, related to classroom organizations such as rules, routines, job responsibilities, and procedures, were also photographed as artifact data. Two 60-minute interviews were conducted with Miguel to better grasp how he developed a classroom community. Additionally, regular informal conversations with Miguel were used as debriefing sessions before and after the classroom observations with a particular focus on the challenges and successes experienced by him as a teacher. To increase the validity of our study, we established an audit trail, keeping track of the analyzed field notes, audio and

video-recordings and the transcribed interviews. Member checks were used to solicit feedback from the participants regarding the accuracy of the transcripts and the analysis. Lastly, we also described in detail the setting, participants, and research methods employed in the study.

A grounded theory approach to data analysis of interview and observational data was used to systematically identify patterns and themes to answer our research questions. First, our data analysis included memo-writing, open coding, followed by axial coding and making connections between the categories and subcategories of transcribed interviews and field notes (Charmaz, 2006); then, we used a constant-comparative coding to capture similarities and differences among the participants' perspectives and experiences followed (Glaser, 1992). The themes developed through the inductive process from the first data set were useful in refining the themes from the second data set of the three classroom observations, informal conversations with the Kindergarten teacher and photographs of classroom organization and displays.

FINDINGS

The results of our study revealed that the foreign-born kindergarten teacher drew upon his cultural and international backgrounds and experiences to bring awareness, sensitivity and understanding of world cultures while focusing on meeting the target language and content objectives. On the other hand, the teacher experienced three-fold challenges of: learning to live and cope in a new country; learning to teach in a newly created school within the context of US educational policies and teaching cultures; and developing new curricula, struggling with culturally relevant pedagogies while concurrently developing their own skills of cultural competency. Above all, the analyses revealed that the teacher and administrators recognized the importance of mediating their experiences from their native countries to bridge the gap between their own cultural backgrounds and those of their American students and families.

“Teaching Cultures” Beyond the Curriculum

According to our participants, the transition to new culture and school expectations were difficult for immigrant teachers despite their ongoing efforts to increase their cultural competency. Having to continuously develop the curriculum to meet the International Baccalaureate (IB) standards was also perceived as a difficult, time-consuming task. However, according to our interviews and observational data, teachers addressed the challenge by collaborating for designing activities and sharing successful strategies for instruction or classroom management. The administrators learned that some teachers struggled to learn about the American educational system in a short period of time, including working through the differences and similarities in schooling between in their home countries and in the US system.

One of the principals discussed such challenges related to the development of Primary Years Program (PYP) curriculum and the teachers' prior experiences in their home countries where they felt the curriculum was more structured and made for them from top-down. In the new context of language immersion in the US, teachers were prompted to be creative, to use inquiry-based approaches to learning, and to work more collaboratively from early years in schooling. For some, all these were new approaches to teaching and learning, including having the freedom to make decisions about content and assessment, which however were often perceived as challenging.

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One of the biggest challenges we have with our teachers, I think it reaches across all the cultures, is that they want to feel, “I’m done with that curriculum” but the whole PYP is you’re never finished, you’re always looking at what you’re taught, how do you make it better; it’s about student outcomes; you know your lessons, your practices, and so they’re beginning to see that this is not an oh, we have to create a curriculum then we can check this off of our list and move on to something else now; you’re always in this creation and that’s in essence what makes the PYP curriculum so organic and real. (FIES Administrator, Interview)

In an attempt to model the inquiry-based approach and be engaged in continuous reflection on their teaching practices, the principal at FIES provided opportunities for his teachers to collaboratively create a constructive learning community. Teachers shared questions, challenges, and best practices in areas ranging from behavior management to strategies for immersion classrooms. Additionally, while drawing on their students’ cultural traditions and keeping sight of the learning goals, teachers were encouraged to weave their cultural experiences from their countries within the curriculum, with a focus on language development. For example, Miguel told us a few examples of using celebration activities to teach and connect with his cultural heritage:

We do activities, for example, we have the Posada next month. It’s a huge party in our class and we have piñatas and roasted tamales. We try to have, um, so all kids can see all parts of all cultures. And, now it is so funny because, since, we are having the Posada party in our school, all the kids, for their birthdays, want to have a piñata for their party. So, you see, that is how much we are affecting them. And, we explain to them, for example, Día de Los Muertos, we explain to them how we celebrate in Mexico. (Miguel, interview #1)

Soon, the curricular goals expanded from teaching language to becoming good citizens and embracing world cultures, values that were encouraged in the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework. As Miguel said above, constructing a classroom that is respectful of diverse cultural traditions fostered multicultural awareness and sensitivity among his students and their families. Alongside this diversity awareness education, teachers and administrators also made sure that their students have opportunities to share and enjoy their familiar American mainstream traditions and practices:

We are celebrating here Halloween, because also we want to continue respecting the culture from the United States because this is something that is traditional for them, the Halloween. But we share with them, how we celebrate in our countries, the Day of the Dead, what is the meaning of that, uh, we can have a (nata) de muertos, for them to see how to put on a (nata) de muertos. But that is the way that we are incorporating part of our cultural pieces into this environment and this culture. But always, we are incorporating what is happening in the US culture what is happening, at Thanksgiving, for example, we don’t celebrate Thanksgiving in Mexico or in the Hispanic culture, but we know that Thanksgiving is a piece of culture in the states that we need to continue celebrating with our communities, so we are just incorporating from different cultures different pieces. (SIES Administrator, Interview)

In the classroom, diverse games, reminiscent of the teachers’ childhood, were also brought into the curricular activities. As shared above, some foreign-born teachers successfully facilitated student agency by inviting students to be teachers of American culture/language and history (such as African American

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role models), thereby sharing the teacher role. In this collaborative space, teachers and students became cultural brokers in their familiar and/or specialty area.

A strong classroom community, where diverse cultural resources, language practices, and teaching roles were shared, enhanced students' academic learning. According to the two administrators, teachers, for example, adopted differentiated instructional strategies for math and literacy activities. Miguel provided opportunities for his Kindergarten students to feel successful, differentiating especially by content and assessment. High achievers were given additional or more difficult tasks, while struggling students were supported with additional scaffolds from Miguel and the assistant teacher. Peer-assisted learning was also encouraged and rewarded. There was an atmosphere of respect, generosity and belonging that was observed (and also confirmed through our conversations with Miguel). Such characteristics contributed to creating culturally responsive classrooms in which young learners felt safe to associate with multiple diverse cultural experiences, values, and identities.

Creating Culturally Responsive Classroom Communities

Miguel and the two administrators agreed that their efforts of creating culturally responsive classroom communities helped address individual behaviors as well. They explained that many teachers were initially surprised of having to deal with behavior issues which was a very "different" expectation from their schooling/teaching experiences in their home countries. Miguel remarked, "you have to waste, maybe, 30 percent of your time redirecting kids. It takes a lot of time away from instruction when you have to redirect." (Miguel, interview #2). Having clear expectations for behavior, practicing the classroom routines daily, using rewards, and positive verbal reinforcements were discussed as common classroom management strategies among the participants which Miguel was also observed to be using in his classroom.

What was noticeable, however, was the emphasis placed on creating culturally responsive classroom communities, with a particular care for developing strong teacher-student relationships. For instance, in order to address the challenges of communication with students' families, mainly due to the different cultural experiences and expectations, educational systems, and professional backgrounds, teachers and administrators worked to increase open conversations about the classroom expectations using regular phone calls and face-to-face meetings to bridge the cultural gap. Miguel confirmed the importance of regular efforts to reach out and engage parents in creating a culturally responsive, caring and inclusive classroom community. He made every effort for his students' families to understand classroom expectations by positioning parents as his critical partners for the children's education:

First time you meet with families, you need to explain to them the expectations that you have in your classroom. So, explain to them that: "I cannot stop to do this job by myself. I need your help because you are part of the team". Of course, you need to show to the parents how much the kids are learning in your classroom, and, all the time you need to do phone calls when they do good in your class, not only when they are misbehaving. Parents respond very, very well in my classroom because parents need to know as soon as possible what's going on in the classroom, so I try to have really good communication with them, and they help me a lot. Of course, you need to show to the parents how much the kids are learning in your classroom, and, all the time you need to do phone calls when they do good in your class, not only when they are misbehaving. (Miguel, interview #2)

The physical organization of classroom environment, showcased by Miguel's Kindergarten classroom, was the materialized practice of such partnership in a culturally responsive classroom community. Miguel had his students bring their family photos to celebrate and connect with the diverse backgrounds of his students. The entering space of his classroom was decorated with students' family photos; the Stars of the week – the selected role model students – were rewarded with an opportunity to present their personal stories through pictures and words, and their families were encouraged to work together on such projects. Besides the regular notes, announcements, and reminders sent home in the students' folders, Miguel was proud to showcase his students' achievements and celebrations in a regular newsletter to families.

Finally, cultural adaptation, constantly made by teachers and administrators, was another important step towards stronger teacher-parent partnerships. For example, field trips are seen as a common experience in American schools whereas they are not necessarily the case in Hispanic countries. Therefore, in an attempt to respect the American culture and familiarity of American families with field trips, the two schools included field trips as part of their curriculum and also as a bounding, recreational activity that helped students and teachers connect. Overall, our study participants highlighted the importance of relating to their students' heritage and home cultures; this collaborative classroom culture then became the main framework for classroom management in this LIS.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With a broader, but more fundamental, definition of classroom management as creating a collaborative classroom culture, our study reveals that building a culturally responsive classroom community is critical for successful classroom management in an educational setting like SIES and FIES where the teachers are mostly foreign-born and students are from multiple different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Up to date, culturally responsive classroom management research paid attention largely to the students' cultural resources (e.g., Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008) or ways to shift the deficit perspectives of teachers and administrators (e.g., Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010). We add our point that foreign-born language teachers in immersion schools, particularly in early childhood classroom like Miguel's, can activate their own and students' cultural, and cross-cultural, assets to build culturally dynamic and inviting classroom communities despite the perceived challenges. This is congruent with what Noddings (2002) called *care-based education*, as it converges with culturally responsive pedagogy at which juncture, teachers and students both develop deeper intercultural competency which in turn enhance their teaching and learning experiences.

Our analysis indicates that Miguel, the kindergarten teacher had a clear vision of developing a classroom community where diverse cultural resources, identities, and practices were validated as a leading component of a successful LIS classroom. The kindergarten teacher along with the two administrators recognized, however, multi-layered challenges, including: 1) the initial and ongoing task of managing cultural differences, as teachers had to adjust not only to the new classroom context at the local level but also to the US teaching cultures and expectations at the institutional level; 2) the difficulty to manage what was perceived as problem behaviors, often exacerbated by the students' fatigue from learning through an unfamiliar language and teachers' different behavioral expectations, and 3) addressing diverse cultural backgrounds of their students and families to collaborate as partners. Despite these challenges in accordance with the results from a previous study (Slapac & Dorner, 2013) however, Miguel, made efforts to establish a collaborative community by engaging with culturally responsive pedagogy at multiple

levels – in their content/language instruction, classroom management, and school-home connection. In this process, cultural experiences and educational practices from his home country, Mexico, was utilized and adapted to- although often in conflict with- the US teaching cultures and practices, as evidenced in Miguel’s instructional practices and physical classroom environment. As a result, this Kindergarten teacher co-constructed with students and families an inclusive classroom community in which diverse cultural values and resources, both of students and teacher, were the most essential resources for learning and communication (Rothstein-Fisch, & Trumbull, 2008).

Children in early childhood classrooms thrive, socioemotionally and academically, only when they feel cared and positively valued in the classroom community and curricular materials (Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter, 2007). When the teacher creates a learning community where students’ as well as the teacher’s cultural identities and resources are validated, s/he is also creating a classroom culture in which the inquisitiveness towards and acceptance of diversity becomes a natural tendency of all community members. In that sense, the successful classroom management is a collateral outcome of such culturally responsive classroom culture. Our study implicates that although the foreign-born teachers in language immersion classrooms may face a larger set of cultural challenges including adjustment of curricular materials and teaching practices, they are also in a position in which they can draw from a larger set of (cross-) cultural resources to build a culturally inclusive and vibrant classroom community. By inviting students and their families as cultural brokers, teachers can empower children to value and integrate their own and others’ cultural practices and identities for successful learning and communication from primary years, particularly in a language they are learning. The rocky road that foreign-born teachers in LIS experience can be an evolutionary journey of their intercultural competency development which our case teacher also self-reported.

Our study recommends that the LIS community enhance the foreign-born teachers’ capacity in building culturally responsive pedagogy and classroom management by providing high-quality professional development that attends to the diversity of student body, urban settings, and the unique challenges of teachers from abroad with an understanding that the US early childhood curriculum may be different from those in the teachers’ native countries. Future studies on the diverse settings of early childhood LIS settings can further inform the policy on immersion school teachers’ certification processes, preparation programs, and continuous support system that can help the school, teachers, students and their families to become true partners in collaboratively building a successful learning community.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Constructive Classroom: A classroom in which learning takes place by drawing from students' prior knowledge, cultural backgrounds and funds of knowledge in constant interaction with those of teachers and other external texts and contexts.

Cross-Cultural Competency: One's competency to understand and work with a wide range of cultural differences on the basis of one's knowledge of self and others in different cultural contexts.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management: Classroom management by way of cultivating classroom members' intercultural competency and creating a collaborative classroom culture.

Culture: An ongoing process of social construction of a set of resources for one's beliefs, actions, narratives, identities, etc. that are shared, contested and negotiated.

Inquiry-Based Curriculum: Curriculum that emphasizes students' role in the learning process through exploration, asking questions and sharing ideas across different content areas.

Language Immersion Program: A language learning program in which students learn content in the chosen target language of the school. Students may spend their entire day or a large portion of their learning in the target language to practice the language in an immersion environment.

Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) Model: A school-wide behavior management system to help practitioners identify students in one of the three categories (primary, secondary and tertiary levels) for services and prevent or address behavioral and or academic interventions from minor to serious behavior problems.

Teaching Culture: A set of implicit and explicit knowledge, attitudes, values, theories, and propositions as well as embodied practices towards teaching in a particular context.