

Chapter 60

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice: A Transformative Pedagogical Model for Equity and Access

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ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) teaching as a transformative pedagogical model for supporting English learners' access to equitable education. It presents the principles and theories of CLR practice, critical pedagogy, and curriculum, along with their implications for learning. Recommendations for CLR curriculum, instruction, and assessment are provided as well.

INTRODUCTION

In today's classrooms, teachers must be prepared to educate a diverse population of students. The students in these classrooms and their learning needs have great complexity. Some students are learning English as a second or third language, some speak several varieties of one or more languages, and learners hail from a wide array of cultural backgrounds (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). As Maxwell (2014) writes, "for the first time, the overall number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students in public K–12 classrooms is expected to surpass the number of non-Hispanic whites" (p. 14). English learners (ELs) are among the fastest-growing segments of the student population, representing about 10% of students in American schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In the next 25 years, ELs will compose 50% of the student population in the nation's schools.

At a time when the student population is likely to be more culturally and linguistically diverse, the teaching force remains mostly homogenous—white, middle class, and monolingual speakers of English (Banks et al., 2005). In addition to this demographic challenge, many teachers feel unprepared to effectively support the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. Given these changing

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demographics, educators must implement a research-based pedagogical model that promotes positive social and academic outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Concurrently, shifting educational policy toward standardization and increasing the accountability of schools and teachers has systematically changed what students are expected to learn and how teachers must be evaluated. The widely adopted Common Core State Standards and the reauthorization of ESEA have triggered sweeping changes in teaching and learning, emphasizing teacher quality and effectiveness. Amidst these changes, little discussion has explored what teacher quality means when addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. “The fact that the nation’s teachers are and will increasingly encounter a diverse range of learners requires that every teacher has sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge and range of skills to meet the unique needs of all students,” assert Samson and Collins (2012, p. 1). As Cochran-Smith (2004) and others (Leonard & Moore, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009) argue, addressing educational inequity and the persistence of achievement gaps requires a reframing of teachers’ work as profoundly grounded in democratic ideals, including a commitment to equity as well as culturally and linguistically responsive practice.

This chapter will highlight the application of culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) practice with English learners by presenting the principles and theories of CLR practice, critical pedagogy, and curriculum, along with their implications for negotiating language and learning. It will provide recommendations for implementing CLR curriculum, as well as instructional and assessment methods that facilitate student learning.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I draw on the sociocultural perspective of learning because it offers a socially just approach to teaching and learning (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). As Oakes and Lipton (1999) have argued, “a sociocultural perspective to learning shifts the burden of low achievement from culturally and linguistically diverse groups to where it belongs: on schools and the larger society” (p. 78). The sociocultural perspective attends to the cultural context of teaching by integrating and systematically accounting for individual, social, and cultural-historical forces in learning (Tharp et al., 2000). This perspective of teaching explicitly addresses the “constitutive relational and cultural nature of teaching. . . [and] . . . situates the learner in a sea of relationships and cultural symbols that shape, and are shaped by, the learner,” explain Conway and Artiles (2005, p. 29). From a sociocultural perspective, teacher knowledge is situated, and teachers have the agency to perceive and capitalize on the possibilities for student learning within the context and constraints of real classrooms (Putnam & Borko, 2000). For CLR practice, the sociocultural perspective of teaching and learning focuses on the potential rather than limitations of the learner, as well as teachers’ capacities to reflect and support students. Thus, the sociocultural context in which teachers work and their forms of engagement with students are critically important to the ways in which teachers use knowledge and work with CLR students.

English Learners and Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice

English learners are among the fastest-growing populations in U.S. schools. ELs represent over 10% of the student population, and in many schools, they account for an even higher percentage (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ELs are a highly heterogeneous group and have a wide range of educational

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