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Pedagogy and Practice: Creating Spaces for Multilingual Learners to Create and Belong

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Abstract: In this article, we—two university faculty members and three classroom teachers—share our experiences exploring issues of educational equity through a collaborative project designed to support multilingual learners' language development and content learning. The conceptual framework guiding the project centered on critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), and sense of school belonging. Through coursework and mentorship, general education teachers learned ways with specific focus on valuing home language practices and knowledge as well as evidence-based practices, such as vocabulary lesson cycles (Carlo et al., 2004). We also share our "lessons learned" about what it takes to support students and families experience a sense of belonging in our schools and to adjust research-based practices in ways that maintain their integrity and are context-informed. Learning about students and families, creating a sense of belonging, and implementing instruction in ways that take into account individual classroom contexts are essential to creating sustainable instructional change and strong socio-emotional and academic outcomes for students.

Keywords: culturally and linguistically sustaining, multilingual learner, multiliteracies, sense of school belonging, vocabulary

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*T*he expansive, near empty hallways were a stark reminder of the high number of students that filled the building in years past. Located near the center of a small city, the high school was hard to miss due to its large size and surrounding athletic fields. The decrease in students, however, seemed to have created space for new possibilities. As we entered the algebra classroom, sounds of Spanish and English merged as small groups of ninth graders gathered in different spaces discussing an assignment, and the two classroom teachers met with individual students. The walls of the rectangular room displayed completed and in-progress graphic organizers, called Frayer Models. Each Frayer model poster contained a vocabulary word in the center surrounded by four squares with definitions, characteristics, examples, and non-examples written in combinations of English and the students' home languages.

In a neighboring building, on a tree-lined street, kindergartners threw up their arms to demonstrate the vocabulary word their teacher was reading. After reading the word "thrill," their teacher raised her arms in the air to model the action they had agreed upon and then said the word in Spanish, "emoción." The teacher checked in with her students to make sure she pronounced it correctly, before reviewing the next word.

About 20 miles away, in a neighborhood elementary school in a mid-sized metropolitan city, a reading specialist and three first-grade students used a pocket chart to complete cloze sentences with the vocabulary words they had been studying for the past three days. The three students read the words, written in English and Arabic on colorful sentence strips, and talked about which word would best complete the cloze sentence in the pocket chart. After placing the word in the chart, they read the sentence together and looked to see their teacher's reaction to their selection.

The three classrooms described are located in two culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse school districts in Michigan that have growing numbers of multilingual learners (ML). The vignettes recount teacher and student experiences from fall 2023 and highlight pedagogies for vocabulary instruction and school belonging that teachers implemented as a part of a partnership project with a local university.

The project is being implemented in 24 classrooms, ranging from kindergarten to high school, across six school districts. The authors of this article include three teachers from two of these districts (Renee, Anthony, and Andrea). Renee and Andrea teach in the same district, in which 80% of students come from minoritized populations. The primary home language is Spanish; 10.74% of students are classified as English learners; and 68% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged. Anthony's school is in a district in which 90% of students are identified as white, though this statistic fails to note the high number of students and families in the district from the Middle East. The primary home language is Arabic; 23.5 % of students are classified as English learners; and 68% of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

The SEED Project

The teachers profiled in the vignettes above—Andrea, Renee, and Anthony—are part of The SEED Pathways Project. SEED stands for *Sustaining Community Knowledge and Language Practices for Educational Equity: Developing Pathways for Teachers of Bi/Multilingual Students*. It is a collaborative project between one university and six school districts designed to increase the number of highly qualified teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and improve language and literacy outcomes for ML. The program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education through a National

Professional Development grant (2022-2027), includes intensive work around research- based language instruction, specifically ongoing and intensive vocabulary instruction, building a sense of classroom and school belonging, educational equity, and family engagement. In-service teachers (IST) participating in SEED complete the seven courses required for a state-approved program leading to an ESL endorsement. The program runs over 20 months, or five university semesters. Two of the courses are completed as part of summer institutes. The summer institutes, which occur in the first and fourth semesters, are two-week intensive experiences that each include a full course, guest speakers, networking with instructional and community mentors, and collaborative work time. The authors of this paper include two university faculty members (Christina and Kathryn) who direct the SEED Project and teach three of the seven courses, and three IST, as noted previously.

"The SEED Project ... is designed to increase the number of highly qualified teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and improve language and literacy outcomes for multilingual learners."

The experiences we share in this article come from teachers at the end of their third course in the program. We begin by discussing the instructional methods and practices for school belonging highlighted in the SEED project. We then share "lessons learned" regarding the methods and practices that IST were learning in relation to culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy and critical consciousness. Multiliteracies and multimodalities reflect these perspectives as both acknowledge the multiple modes, language practices, and technologies used for making meaning and sharing knowledge. For this article's purposes, we define multiliteracies as the ability to develop knowledge, understanding and meaning through multiple modes and forms of productive and receptive communication (e.g., speaking, gesture,

reading, listening, viewing, creating images). We define multimodality as the ability to combine modes to communicate ideas (e.g., sharing information through labeled images and oral description, extracting information from both text and discussion).

Instruction

As part of the grant application, Christina and Kathryn committed to supporting teachers in learning to implement an instructional strategy that meets the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) criteria for moderate or strong evidence of improving outcomes for multilingual students. The strategy we selected came from the *Educator's Practice Guide: Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* (Baker, et al., 2014). The guide includes four recommendations, from which we chose "teach a set of vocabulary words intensively over several days using a variety of instructional activities" (p. iii).

The strategy, in general, involves purposeful text selection (identifying texts related to curricular goals in English and translated into students' home language, primarily using online translation tools), purposeful selection of academic vocabulary words for in-depth instruction, teaching vocabulary using multiple modalities, and teaching word-learning strategies for students to use independently to determine word meaning. The instruction has been shown to be beneficial for both monolingual and multilingual students. To structure and support IST to take this work on, we modeled our instructional program on the research of Carlo et al. (2004), who studied the use of vocabulary lesson cycles. Vocabulary lesson cycles are five-week instructional

units that include daily instruction on vocabulary words related to curricular topics as well as word learning strategies. The cycles are meant to build vocabulary, but also understanding of content by facilitating deeper understanding of text.

Each vocabulary lesson cycle includes four weeks of vocabulary instruction in which new texts and new words (all on the same or related topics) are introduced each of the first four weeks, along with intense instruction on the words' meanings and word learning strategies. The fifth week includes four days of review of the words from weeks 1-4 and one day dedicated to assessment of the words in the five-week cycle.

The original research study that supports this instructional recommendation was conducted under ideal circumstances (all teachers had a full 30-45 minutes to dedicate to the instruction every day for 15 weeks), all ML spoke the same language (Spanish), and all instruction took place only in fifth-grade classrooms. Due to these commonalities, the nine participating teachers implemented the instruction uniformly. We, on the other hand, were working with 24 teachers in different grade levels and content areas who are working under a variety of contextual constraints. Our teachers hailed from six different school districts, held various roles (teachers, coaches, interventionists), taught kindergarten up to 12th grade, and taught both in non-departmentalized elementary contexts and in subject-specific secondary classrooms. Their curricular mandates, job requirements, support systems, and schedules were vastly different. This led us to realize that we would be learning how to implement an evidence-based practice while also adapting instruction for different teaching contexts.

Of course, the "gold standard" is to implement research-proven practices with fidelity. However, our goal was to implement research-proven practices sustainably. Implementation science is quite clear that if we fail to support teachers to adapt practices to their own contextual constraints, they are much less likely to be implemented (at all), successful, or sustained and teachers are much more likely to be frustrated (e.g., Blumenfeld et al., 2000; Smith & Robinson, 2020). Conversely, when professional learning is grounded in the classroom experiences of individual teachers, it supports implementation efforts (e.g., Broemmel et al., 2022; Darling Hammond et al., 2017; Dennis & Hemmings, 2019; Hawley & Valli, 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Belonging

A second central component to the SEED Project is supporting teachers in developing a deep understanding of the relationship between sense of school belonging and educational equity with specific attention to ML and their families. School belonging refers to feelings of connection, trust, and support held by students, family members, and teachers within a school context. Sense of school belonging promotes well-being (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007), contributes to school-based learning (González & Padilla, 1997; Sánchez, et al., 2005), and supports feelings of being valued in school (Drolet & Arcand, 2013). There are also benefits that are specific to ML, such as supporting risk-taking in using English as they are developing proficiency and perseverance when academic tasks are difficult (Souto-Manning, 2013). Forming relationships with peers provides opportunities to learn the expectations and norms within a school (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009) and support for class activities (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). There are several factors that contribute to students developing a strong sense of school belonging; these include forming relationships with peers, perceiving that teachers and school staff will offer assistance when needed, and students' belief that they are an important member of the school or classroom community.

Collective understanding of school belonging is first developed through IST experiencing the impact of sense of belonging in the SEED Project on their own learning, professional growth, and well-being. Our commitment to these goals centers on our understanding that connection and belonging mediate new understandings, even when that learning is uncomfortable or challenging. For the SEED Project to be effective, it is essential that we all—IST and teacher educators—establish a level of trust and sense of community. This enables us to reflect on schooling in the U.S., deconstruct myths, disrupt biases, open our minds to learn from families and community members, and create authentic and meaningful spaces for MLs' home languages and knowledge in classrooms.

School belonging is rooted in culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy (Hammond, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014), which begins with critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness refers to an awareness of one's own perspectives, biases, interpretations and expectations regarding all aspects of schooling. This includes building an understanding of the political nature of education and assumptions for teaching, learning, and family engagement (Freire, 1970). Scholars stress that teachers of ML must enact critical consciousness as a continuous reflective process to examine deficit perspectives regarding their students and families that come from historically marginalized communities (Bartolomé, 2008; DeNicolo, et al., 2017; Kaveh & Buckband, 2022; Parra López et al., 2024). Culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy emphasizes the importance of learning about and drawing upon students' funds of knowledge (González et al., 1993) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

We draw on funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth to highlight the expertise and language practices of minoritized students and families, while also countering dominant deficit narratives that are upheld through educational policies and practices. Funds of knowledge refers to the networks of expertise that support daily living within families and communities (González et al., 1993; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth further highlights the ways Latine and other historically marginalized communities possess interrelated skills, abilities, and knowledge and how this intellectual capital is a resource for learning, sustaining home language practices, and navigating institutions. Cultivating a sense of school belonging for linguistically and culturally diverse students requires that teachers, PK-12 and university-level, develop the ability to see these forms of knowledge and utilize instructional practices such as multiliteracies that sustain and build upon what learners know from their homes and communities (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Key Take-Aways, So Far

The work of teaching is rewarding and often joyful, but it is also difficult and humbling, both for teachers and teacher educators. Through our experiences with the SEED Project, so far, we have learned as much from our successes as our missteps. As a group, we have adopted the philosophy that becoming effective educators is not something we can achieve and check off our lists, but rather entails being in a constant state of growing, changing, and refining. It is in that spirit that we share a few of the most important things we have learned, so far, about both implementing the vocabulary lesson cycles and building a sense of belonging for ML and all students, families, and teachers.

Vocabulary Lesson Cycles

As aforementioned, the original study that supports vocabulary lessons cycles took place in fifth-grade classrooms, all of which had ML who were developing

Spanish and English, and teachers who were able to commit to at least 30 minutes of vocabulary instruction, five days per week, for 15 weeks. The teachers in the SEED Project are working under different constraints and as a result, had to modify their instruction to make it feasible and sustainable. As SEED teachers have been building and implementing these units, they have been learning a lot about what it means to implement them in real classrooms with real students. Although we have learned many lessons, two of the most important ones so far are that excellent vocabulary instruction is not all or nothing and instructional strategies exist on a spectrum.

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Vocabulary Instruction Isn't All or Nothing. If teachers are asked to use a practice in their classroom—no matter how well supported by research—they are unlikely to do so in a sustained way if they are asked to adopt it in its entirety, without modification, or are left to figure out how to adapt it to their contexts without support for doing so (e.g., Blumenfeld et al., 2000; Broemmel et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Dennis & Hemmings, 2019; Hawley & Valli, 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Smith & Robinson, 2020). One clear barrier to implementing the vocabulary lesson cycles was the ideal time teachers were trying to dedicate each day: 30 minutes. We expected this to primarily be an issue for our secondary teachers, who teach 50-minute class periods. Dedicating over half their time to vocabulary instruction, when they had a great deal of content to teach as well, seemed infeasible. However, we found that this was also a barrier for elementary teachers. As a group, the teachers in this project felt inundated with curricular demands as well as other required school activities (e.g., assemblies, testing, field trips) and interruptions

(e.g., emergency drills, snow days) that made consistent instructional routines challenging and, in some cases, impossible.

Renee, a kindergarten teacher, managed this dilemma by adjusting her expectations for how quickly she could move through a cycle, but also protecting the reduced amount of time she had for the cycle. Her time is limited as there is so much to squeeze into a day and all of it has to be done well. For Renee, setting aside and protecting 15-30 minutes on some days for the vocabulary lessons made it possible to get them in, though she needed to adjust and spread the five days of each cycle across two weeks instead of one. To accommodate for what students might forget on the days in between, she found it helpful to review the words before each lesson.

Andrea is a high school math teacher who both teaches her own classes and co-teaches a class with a SEED colleague. The two of them were fortunate to be able to co-plan for ninth- and tenth-grade math classes. At first, they were both apprehensive because, as "math people," they did not see themselves as literacy teachers. The instructional practices and terminology were brand new for them. During the SEED summer institute, they were able to collaborate and support each other to select texts, words, and activities for the first five weeks. They also shared their experiences at the school to think through what instructional strategies would most benefit their ML. In the fall, they worked together as they designed their second lesson cycle to shift from using textbook excerpts to building their cycle around a math theme that included various authentic and teacher-created texts. Their first vocabulary lesson cycle focused on specific math processes (e.g., creating expressions); in contrast, their second five-

week cycle integrated math vocabulary and concepts into a unit themed around planning a trip. The second cycle reflected a different approach than in the study, but Andrea noted that it is a better fit for their curriculum and has been well received by the ML and monolingual students who have become increasingly more willing to participate in conversations about math.

Anthony, an elementary-level interventionist, spent time with his instructional mentor working on how to look at the curriculum he was given by the district and identify appropriate scaffolds for vocabulary lesson cycle activities that would simultaneously build understanding of the content and language. Collaborating with peers and his instructional mentor became even more essential in the beginning of the school year, when he was moved from being a classroom teacher into a building interventionist role. His peers and mentors supported him to pivot his instruction, considering what it might look like for new groups of students, and what his role might look like in creating a sense of belonging in and for groups that were with him for only brief periods instead of whole days.

It is clear that successfully adapting instructional practices to particular contexts is a collaborative effort, in this case between IST, building mentors, and program faculty. Moving forward, we are exploring how all courses can be designed to create space for these types of collaborative co-creation of lessons and adaptations, tapping into more robust support networks.

Instructional Strategies Exist on a Spectrum. Teachers also made changes to the instructional practices they were learning about to make them relevant to their students. Two of these practices and the changes made to them are highlighted below.

Cloze Sentences. Day three of the first four weeks of every lesson cycle was devoted to cloze

sentences. Cloze sentences are contextually supportive sentences with a key word (here a target vocabulary word) omitted. SEED teachers created two types of cloze sentences. The first type was "close context" sentences. For close context sentences, teachers created cloze sentences that closely mirrored the sentences in which the vocabulary words were found in the text. For example, if the original sentence was, "If you see somebody doing something dangerous, you should **alert** an adult," a close context sentence might be, "When he witnessed the accident, he knew he should _____ the police." The second type of cloze sentence was "distant." Distant cloze sentences could use a different context or sentence structure or even be based on an alternate meaning or part of speech for the word. For example, a distant context sentence for "alert" might be, "It isn't safe to drive unless you are feeling awake and _____.″

For the cloze sentence activities, the recommended activity from the original study was for teachers to support their students as they worked in groups to complete the close context cloze sentences using a word bank, then discuss how they came to their decisions about which words should go in each blank. Then, the students were given the distant context cloze sentences and asked to do the same thing, with a particular focus on how the two meanings or uses of the words are related. For example, a close context sentence for alert, may refer to alert as in when you alert the police, you are asking them to give something their full attention, quickly. A distant cloze may refer to feeling alert, as in being fully awake and able to pay attention to important information. Through discussion, students may determine that in both cases, the word is related to focusing attention.

In lower elementary classrooms, the standard procedure for cloze sentences often was not feasible because the younger students were not yet independent readers and thus not able,

independently or in small groups, to read the sentences and word banks. To accommodate for this, our lower elementary teachers often worked with the whole class or facilitated small groups one at a time, as opposed to having their students collaborate only with each other in small groups. They also limited the number of words, often using five or six words instead of 10-12. These adjustments allowed their students to fully participate in and benefit from the cloze sentence activities.

At all levels, teachers made other adjustments to fit their students' language skills, understanding of the task, and developmental needs. They did this by adjusting group size, shifting from small-group to whole-group discussions, having their students complete the sentences independently and then discuss, and presenting multilingual word banks, among other shifts. (See Figure 1 for translated word cards from Anthony's classroom.)

Figure 1
Translated Vocabulary Words
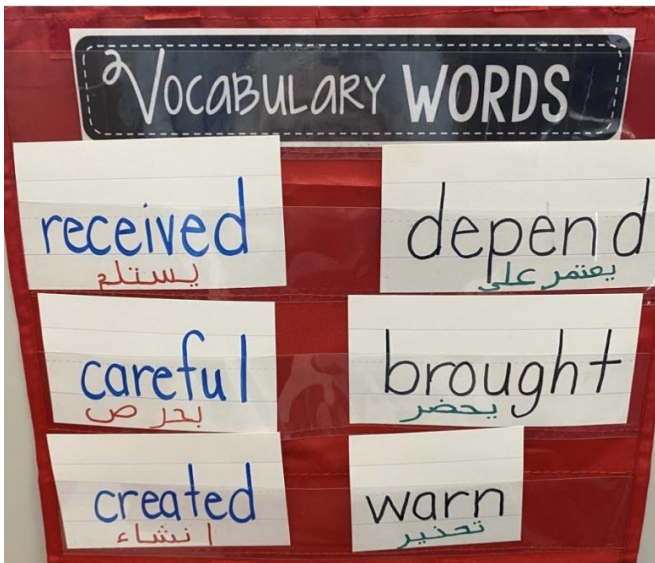
Frayer Models. Day four of the first four weeks of every lesson cycle called for teachers to engage their students in deep learning of word meanings. One instructional activity that most teachers had some familiarity with and felt

comfortable using was Frayer models. Frayer models have been modified and studied for decades (see Frayer et al., 1969 for the original work) and have the benefit of being quite flexible. In a Frayer model, traditionally, the target word is in the center of a graphic organizer with four boxes surrounding it with space to include meaningful information about the words (See Figure 2). Typically, this includes some combination of the definition, characteristics, examples, non-examples, synonyms, antonyms, etcetera.
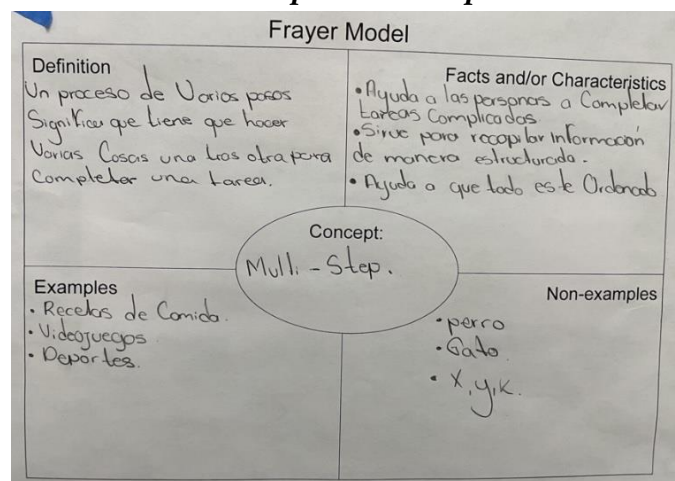
Figure 2
Frayer Model
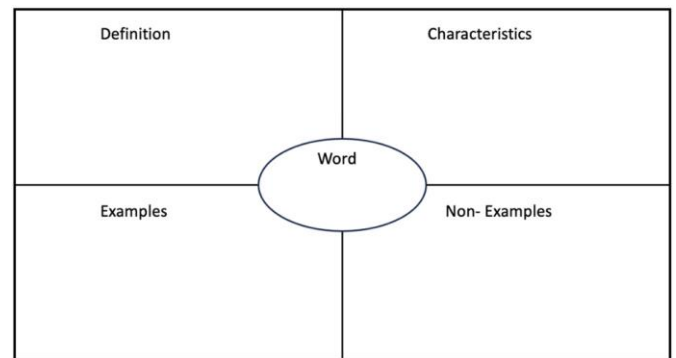
When Renee was preparing her first lessons in the summer institute, she planned to do Frayer models with her kindergarten students, putting the word in the center and in the four surrounding boxes, the definition, an illustration, examples, and non-examples. When she began teaching the cycles in the fall, she modified her template to accommodate her young learners. She still includes four squares, but the content has been modified. In square one, her students copy the word and draw a picture representing the meaning. In both squares two and three, students draw examples of the meaning. Finally, in square 4 they draw a non-example of the word. (See Figure 3 for an example of a Frayer model for the word "thrill.") These young students are doing well with the new structure, and some have begun to shift from working with the whole class on the same word to creating their own models with different focal words.

Figure 3
Kindergarten Frayer Model for the Word "Thrill"

Figure 4
Ninth-grade Frayer model using the mathematical concept "multi-step"
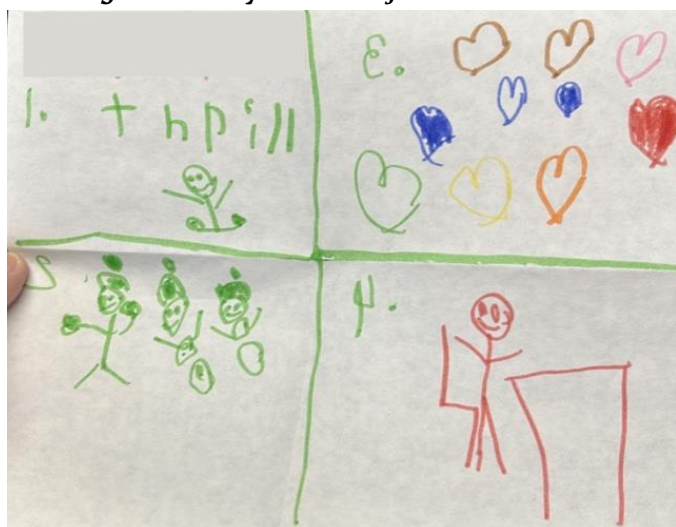
Not surprisingly, Frayer models looked considerably different in Andrea's co-taught ninth grade math classroom and the elementary settings of two other teachers. While they did put the vocabulary word (concept) in the center, and include the definition, examples, and non-examples, they also broadened the "characteristics" category that we had discussed in the summer institute to also include "facts." However, the most striking modification Andrea and her teaching partner made was to encourage their students, who were working in small groups, to use translanguaging practices, expressing their understandings in either their first language or English, as can be seen in Figure 4. In the beginning of the year, Andrea's students were hesitant to discuss concepts in their first language. However, she noticed that after telling her students that Spanish was her first language, too, and occasionally initiating exchanges in Spanish, they began to ask her and each other clarifying questions related to the content in Spanish.

Sense of Belonging

In the previous section, we discussed the lessons learned from the implementation of vocabulary lesson cycles with ML. An additional central component of the SEED Project is the role of school belonging in promoting educational equity for ML. The SEED collaborative project has taught us a lot about how teachers can develop their knowledge of factors that promote students' sense of belonging and how to cultivate school belonging across different grade levels and contexts. We will discuss two of the lessons we learned in the following sections: Multimodality and Belonging and Multiliteracies and Belonging.

Multimodality and Belonging

Social semiotics refers to ways imagery, visual representations, movement, and gestures mediate communication and meaning making (Smith et al., 2021). Canagarajah (2018) reminds us that multimodality is often positioned as a necessary support for language that is viewed as lacking or insufficient. Semiotic modes, however, similar to language practices, are rooted in the social contexts

where they are used (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Modes are dynamic, intentional, and do not only function to support language, but also to convey meaning based on shared practices within a social group. Multimodal learning took center stage in the first summer institute out of necessity. Because the institute was held for eight hours each day, having students do the typical level of course reading outside of each class was not feasible. Instead, we spent class time dividing up the readings, discussing them, and sharing understandings with each other in a variety of ways. This involved reading and viewing of various texts (articles, chapters, videos, etc.), collaborative discussion, note taking, and sharing of information through demonstration, writing, drawing, and speaking. We learned that it allowed IST to experience their course as both learners and teachers and draw on their own repertoires, funds of knowledge, and communicative practices. The text and instructors were no longer the dominant distributors of information; rather the whole class—instructors and students—built understanding together.

We realized that expanding the modes for engaging IST with the content increased the range of pathways for learning. Our IST varied in their own funds of knowledge, background in teaching and equity, years of teaching, and experiences with ML. Providing multiple pathways to connect content with their personal and professional knowledge enhanced their abilities to imagine new ways to connect with their students. After multiple opportunities to learn from one another in different ways, IST witnessed and reflected on how engaging with content in a variety of formats increased opportunities for all students to share their sense making.

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This understanding of multimodality and accessing all forms of knowledge for meaning making was very important when we began to reflect on issues of race, equity, and the history of schooling. When addressing this content, Christina and Kathryn saw that, for some, this was new information that was difficult and uncomfortable to grapple with. Christina and Kathryn learned that creating more opportunities for open dialogue that did not require a specific mode or format for participation assisted IST in finding ways to reflect, ask questions, and learn from one another. The freedom to choose how to engage and be present enabled IST to examine what they need to learn to create spaces where their students' home knowledge, cultural and language practices could be positioned as correct and necessary. This led to IST's increased understanding of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, while also facilitating connections and sense of belonging between all SEED participants.

Multiliteracies and School Belonging

Cultivating school belonging requires that teachers develop ideological awareness (Bartolomé, 2008), an understanding of the ways dominant ideologies shape schooling and inform policies that function as barriers to equity in U.S. schools. Reflecting on one's perspectives in this way requires vulnerability and a willingness to learn and disrupt existing norms (Marsh et al., 2022). Critical consciousness and ideological awareness are essential for embracing multiliteracies as this approach seeks to understand the ways children and youth make meaning across modes, technologies, and language practices (Vasudevan, 2010).

SEED participants are learning and reflecting individually and collectively across semesters as they develop and implement the vocabulary lesson cycles. The time they are dedicating and sense of community they are building have led to important insights. These insights include rethinking the relationship between home languages and English language development, recognizing the dynamic nature of language (Skerrett, 2012) and the value of honoring learners' language practices (Canagarajah, 2011).

One example of this is that, in the past, Renee encouraged the families of her multilingual kindergarteners to try and only speak English at home to help their children learn English. She now encourages her students to continue to use their home language while learning to speak English, as it allows them to make connections to English as well as keep their relationship to their home language. Renee also shared how important it was for her to provide multimodal (written and audio) Spanish translation for the books she was using each week. When she did not have an audio translation for one of the texts, she took pictures and translated each page. She then sent the translated version home to her students' families and asked parents to read the story to their children. The parents were appreciative of the opportunity to read with their children in Spanish and the kindergarten students loved the experience. When they listened to the story in English the next day, they felt more comfortable and connected to the class lesson.

Anthony has also made changes stemming from the opportunity to work with a mentor that speaks the same language as his students. Their meetings supported him to not only learn phrases in Arabic but also develop his understanding of his young students' cultural practices. Utilizing instructional practices and strategies that connect to students' culture supports not only his efforts to cultivate school belonging, but also ensures the ML he works with develop positive self-images. A shift for him was recognizing the impact of his students seeing that what they learn from home is valued in the classroom.

Andrea expanded her awareness of what it meant to share her personal experiences with bilingualism with her students and how it led to a greater sense of belonging for them. Becoming more open about Spanish being her first language led her to realize how this enabled her to build relationships quickly with her high school students. This also led to Spanish-speaking students who are not in her classes coming up to her just to have conversations. She is also starting to see her students embrace their home languages academically. For example, one of her students lit up as she explained, "Oh my God. Like, my English is pretty good but there's stuff in math sometimes that I can't translate or express in English. But you speak Spanish so, I can tell you." The student was so excited about being able to speak in Spanish and express her mathematical thinking, something she can't always do with other teachers.

These brief examples teach us that belonging in teacher education and PK-12 classrooms develops from opportunities to engage authentically with others through texts, talk, and personal experience, in spaces where bilingual language practices and cultural knowledge are valued. These examples highlight how opportunities for multiliteracies, translanguaging, and translation brought greater connection for ML, teachers, and family members.

Conclusion

Collective learning from the experiences of teachers taking the lead on cultivating school belonging and implementing evidence-based vocabulary instruction with ML is significant for several reasons. First, the lessons described above also indicate the importance of teachers adapting curriculum to meet the goals

and needs they identify for their students and the constraints of their settings. Second, most general education classrooms do not consistently provide opportunities for students to access their full linguistic repertoire for learning due to lack of preparation (Mills et al., 2020). The work of the teachers in the SEED Project illustrates ways that teachers can create spaces where students can choose to engage through multiple languages and various modes, as well as draw from all forms of knowledge.

Implications for Teacher Education

The lessons identified above have implications for teacher training. Teacher education has not adequately prepared teachers to understand the language practices of multilingual speakers and communities (Rosa, 2019). This is problematic when considering that teachers are placed in the position to uphold language policies through instructional programs, evaluation of student learning, and curricula (Shohamy, 2006). The combination of teachers' lack of adequate training and limited opportunities to examine their perspectives regarding language education policies contributes to the maintenance of myths and misunderstandings with respect to language development and learning. Without training and exploration of commonly held perspectives and beliefs about multiliteracies, multimodality, and language learning, teachers are left without tools to question the existing policies and curriculum that view languages as separate and specific forms as superior to others (Valdés, 2004). Thus, disruption of the common myths around language is essential for educational equity. Teacher preparation programs must incorporate the examination of language ideologies and language policies throughout initial certification programs for all teacher candidates, not only those specializing in multilingual or bilingual education.

Collaborating on a project over several semesters provided IST and teacher educators with insight into how teacher education programs can support IST in exploring their own perspectives and interpretations of MLs' learning. The on-going and community-oriented nature of this project engages teachers and teacher educators in examining instructional moves that impact learning in positive ways in real time. For IST, focusing on learning from and with one another and their students and families has not only contributed to a sense of belonging, but also a collective sense of curiosity and joy. This is something we need to work on to replicate across programs.

Teaching and learning vocabulary in an intentional and intensive manner can be a vehicle for cultivating belonging, particularly when teachers strive to learn about their students' home languages, funds of knowledge, and community cultural wealth. What we have learned from the SEED teacher participants is that a multiliteracies and multimodal approach to vocabulary instruction promotes much more than just the acquisition of terms and concepts. It creates space for ML to access their full linguistic repertoire for learning and positions students and their families' knowledge as valuable.

Implications for K-12 Curriculum Implementation

For many school districts, trends, and educational policies influence curriculum more than understandings of language development or the everyday language practices of multilinguals, teachers are rarely invited into the curricular planning process (Shohamy, 2006). The SEED Project highlights what is possible when teachers have the freedom to design and redesign how curriculum is implemented and adapted. When IST were afforded options for how to meet their school or subject area requirements, they designed lesson cycles that were meaningful and engaging for themselves as well as their students. For many IST, this sense of ownership

was essential to their personal sense of excitement in collaborating with students and families around learning. Multiliteracies and multimodality opened a path for connecting with ML, which in turn impacted IST's interpretation of ML and confidence in reaching out to families and adapting curriculum to best support classroom learning. Implementing this type of curricular design at a larger scale (e.g., for a longer time period or building-wide) is a promising practice for positively impacting both student learning and teacher job satisfaction.

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