

Social Justice in Action: A Document Analysis of the Integration of Social Justice Principles into Teaching

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Abstract: Teachers of all students, particularly English Learners (ELs), need to integrate social justice pedagogy into their lessons so that all learners are included in the learning process, thinking critically about curriculum and taking action in the face of injustice. There has been some research into teacher preparation programs focusing on how they integrate culturally responsive and social justice pedagogy into their curricula and whether there has been a positive impact on teachers' self-awareness, social justice knowledge and classroom practices as a result (Ruffin, 2016; Thieman, 2016). However, these studies do not address lesson content. This document analysis study, framed theoretically with critical intercultural communication (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010), explored the integration of social justice principles into lesson plans developed by pre-service and in-service English as a second language (ESL) teachers who were pursuing a TESOL graduate degree (Initial License) at a university in the Northeast of the United States. The lesson plans were analyzed using a rubric aligned with the Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Biases Framework. The exploration unveiled the need for more connections to students' backgrounds, structured in-class dialogues, support for linguistic needs and modeling of intercultural practices.

Keywords: social justice standards, dialogue, intercultural practices, bias

The concept of social justice has become increasingly common in education. More and more educational institutions, programs and organizations integrate social justice orientations into their missions and practices. Social justice in education is characterized by respectful communication and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning that can lead to more equitable educational outcomes (Nieto & Bode, 2018). However, how exactly can social justice be integrated into such domains of teaching as lesson planning, delivering instruction and assessing student learning? What does it entail and how are we preparing pre-service and in-service teachers in academic degree programs to design lesson plans and deliver instruction for social justice? Do they know what a lesson needs to include in order to be considered a lesson grounded in social justice principles? What are these principles? And how do they inform teaching? All of these questions need to be addressed in teacher education preparation. It is important to discuss and promote social justice principles and their application across all education tracks and ensure that it is not limited to multicultural education programs and courses. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) academic programs are not an exception considering the fact that diversity is a crucial characteristic of a classroom of English learners (ELs).

It is not sufficient to follow a prescribed curriculum; instead it is necessary to plan instruction to address social realities and dynamics within the teaching context and beyond (Ciechanowski, 2013). This entails integrating practices focusing on inclusion, respectful relationships, community building

and action against bias and injustice. These social justice principles must be a solid component of instructional practices, activities, and routines.

The purpose of the document analysis described in this article was to examine lessons created by pre-service and in-service teachers in a TESOL graduate program for initial K-12 licensure at a university in New England. Particularly, the integration of social justice principles into those lesson plans was examined. To define social justice principles, *Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Biases Framework* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) and related literature on social justice in education described in depth below were used for the analysis.

Literature Review

This literature review begins with an overview of the theoretical framework and guiding philosophy for this study, critical intercultural communication (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010) and the multilingual turn (May, 2014), and then discusses definitions of social justice and methods of integrating social justice into teaching.

Theoretical Framework and Guiding Philosophy

This study is framed theoretically with critical intercultural communication (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010), a framework that purports that all communication is power-laden; it critiques the notion that there is a level playing field across cultures. Intercultural communication studies have often ignored power imbalances in communication, even though this is almost, arguably always, impossible to do. When two people communicate across differences, there are power dynamics at play and those dynamics must be integrated into the way that communication is examined and understood. Piller (2016) discusses the idea that linguistic diversity is a term that “has in some contexts become a euphemism for linguistic subordination” (p. 7). Dominant and subordinate identities are interacting within all individuals depending on the context, and it is essential that the study of these power-laden dynamics is integrated in teacher education programs, as is explained below.

In critical applied linguistics, these power dynamics play a crucial role, and there has been a turn away from the native/non-native dichotomy where language learners are seen as lacking. Instead, the discipline underscores the competencies of bi/multilingual learners (May, 2014). The fields of TESOL and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) have been critiqued for lagging behind this multilingual turn and yet there are a variety of voices trying to change the dominant narratives. Canagarajah (2014) explains the multilingual repertoire that learners develop as they are using languages. Instead of viewing languages as distinct, this is an integrated view of language learning that highlights the strengths and capacities of multilingual learners. Norton (2014) describes the role of investment in language learning, suggesting that one’s social, cultural and linguistic identities must be integrated in order for learners to fully commit to the learning process.

Social Justice in Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning that account for the power imbalances inherent in communication and the multi-faceted identities of individuals are critical so that *all* students are able to learn from the curriculum and from one another. The current study uses Nieto and Bode’s (2018) definition of social justice: “a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity. On a societal scale, this means affording each person the real - not simply a stated or codified - opportunity to achieve to her or his potential and full participation in a democratic society by giving each person access to the goods, services and cultural capital of a society, while also

affirming the culture and talents of each individual and the group or groups with which she or he identifies” (Nieto & Bode, 2018, p. 8). A classroom community should not only foster fair and generous communication among all students, but it also needs to ensure that learners are integrated into interactions, with equitable access to curricula. This is particularly critical in a classroom of English language learners as a lack of language proficiency may restrict them from classroom participation if proper supports are not provided.

Education for social justice is not a new idea and many are working tirelessly to ensure that education is built on equity, activism and social literacy (Ayers, Quinn, & Stoval, 2009, p. xiv). Education has historically been deeply inequitable in the United States, with severe racial and economic disparities in educational quality and outcomes. The curriculum offered to many children in U.S. schools, especially students of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, has focused on lower-order “rote” skills, not asking children to engage with one another and problem solve. To counteract this and include all students in critical thinking, it is essential that teachers are prepared to teach higher-order thinking skills to all students (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Integration of Social Justice into Classroom Communities

In effective education for social justice, all students are integrated into the classroom, learning from the curriculum. There are myriad opportunities for critical thinking and self-reflection, questioning power imbalances and the status quo as well as taking action in the face of injustice. This section presents an exploration of the research on the components of education for social justice, pointing to research gaps and the need for the current study.

In order for all students to reach their academic potential, reciprocal teaching approaches, where power is shared by teachers and students, are essential. Establishing connections to students’ backgrounds, experiences and prior learning is consistent with social justice principles and plays a critical role in students’ learning (Ciechanowski, 2013). These connections make learning meaningful and authentic, thus increasing opportunities for understanding the concepts taught in the lesson and providing a solid foundation for future learning (Echevarría & Graves, 2010). Teachers should include students’ stories in lessons when possible, as life stories foster engagement in instruction and become the building blocks of effective planning and curriculum. They expose both ELs and non-EL students to diverse perspectives and thus enrich their learning experiences. Furthermore, by drawing connections to EL students’ unique backgrounds, the teacher demonstrates and models a respectful attitude to diversity and encourages students’ curiosity about multiple ways of doing things (Yoon & Kim, 2012). Finally, teachers should analyze the social act of language, particularly how language use is a critical component of the story sharing process (Fan, 2013).

In order to effectively bring these stories into the classroom, teachers should see students as knowledge producers and linguistic experts (Bucholtz et al., 2014). All too often in educational contexts, the teacher is the knower and the students are seen as lacking in knowledge (Freire, 2000). Pedagogy viewing students as experts and capitalizing on their funds of knowledge, supports “young people’s construction of powerful identities for themselves, identities in which both their academic aspirations and their linguistic and cultural background have an equal place and are mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting” (Bucholtz et al., 2014, p. 149).

Incorporating students’ backgrounds and expertise into a classroom effectively is a challenging task. All students have multi-layered identities, and there is no one-size-fits-all method for fostering an inclusive classroom community and learning from students’ perspectives (Ciechanowski, 2013). Atkinson and Sohn (2013) explored this notion through their case study of one particular student’s cultural identity, uncovering the reality that there was no coherent whole. Instead, within this one student there were multiple, intersecting, often conflicted identities. The concept of intersectionality

is complex, as it underscores the impossibility of exploring one identity alone (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016); as the social world is explored and analyzed, one must account for the many facets of identity (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, as teachers approach their students, they have to think of the intersecting dynamics of race, language, gender, class, sexual orientation and so on. Teachers have to bring their awareness not only of interlocking identity categories, but also of systems of oppression (racism, heterosexism, etc.) into their teaching practice, combating the impact that powerful groups have over marginalized groups (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). Furthermore, an essential understanding that teachers have to develop is that such systems of oppression are not static but rather are multidimensional, variable, dynamic and continuously evolving in line with the changing society and developments in the human history (Bell, 2007).

Thus, learning about and discussing linguistic and cultural stories is insufficient; they have to be viewed through power structures, which can help foster a rich and safe learning space among teachers and students. Nieto and Bode (2018) explain that language and cultural issues have to be critically examined through a lens of equity and power in order to bring about change and sustainable learning opportunities. The development of the *Social Justice Standards* as part of the Southern Poverty Law Center' (SPLC) Teaching Tolerance project presents a solid attempt to integrate the critical principles of social justice into K-12 education. The standards used in this article to frame the rubric for the lesson plan analysis were developed based on the four goals of anti-bias education, centering on (1) *identity*, (2) *diversity*, (3) *justice* and (4) *action* (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). Students need to learn about who they are and what makes up their social/group identities (*identity*). They also need to learn about one another, creating connections (*diversity*). Then, they develop language to recognize and describe injustice (*justice*) and get empowered to act against prejudice and discrimination (*action*).

Guiding students on a path from self-awareness to collaborative learning and then ultimately action in the face of injustice requires a teacher to be self-aware and self-reflective of his/her identities and how they impact their students. In addition to knowing themselves, teachers have to find opportunities to investigate social dilemmas with their students. Finding these opportunities to connect lesson content to social dilemmas that are relevant to students is a strategic balancing act requiring teachers to “become jugglers to navigate across multiple objectives within a lesson and explorers to embrace opportunities to question and investigate social dilemmas with students” (Ciechanowski, 2013, p. 20). A classroom community needs to have peaceful relationships that are actively nurtured. As students are engaged in conversations about peace building, their critical thinking and conflict resolution skills develop. Jakar and Milofsky (2016) state, “The basic concepts and skills in conflict transformation and peacebuilding deal with reducing prejudice, building relationships, communicating effectively, and using negotiation to manage disagreements” (p. 44). In order to do this, Jakar and Milofsky (2016) recommend integrating multiple perspectives, teaching dialogue, engaging students in interaction, sharing stories and empowering students.

Delpit (1995; 2006) discusses the inherent power imbalances in our classrooms, and how students from marginalized communities often get the message they are failing and struggling in school, when in fact the schools are the ones that need to change to better support these students. Delpit (1995; 2006) explains that teachers need to know and connect with the cultures of their students and also teach them the skills they need in order to navigate powerful discourses in society. In other words, teaching students to write requires both practicing explicit language skills for successful communication in powerful discourses and honoring one's home cultural and linguistic knowledge. This combination will equip students to become savvy navigating different genres and code switching, both critical for their academic and personal success. De Jong and Harper (2005) explain that teachers of all students, and in particular ELs, need to not only have an understanding of students' linguistic

and cultural backgrounds, they also need to have critical linguistic awareness that will allow them to create instructional activities to best meet ELs' needs and include them in the learning process.

Tomita and Spada (2013) explain that form-focused activities in language instruction provide more opportunities for learners to successfully communicate in second language practice. If they know what specific structure they are practicing, they can use that to explain themselves and participate in classroom dialogue. Simply expecting language learners to engage in dialogue in a classroom, without providing them with linguistic structures to join the conversation or add to a point is unfair to ELs and others who do not yet have the language for joining such a conversation. Similarly, intercultural contact has to be actively facilitated and structured to allow intercultural learning (Bennett, 2009). Just putting students in groups, without providing them specific activities and learning tasks, does not mean that they will learn from one another and in some cases, they will actually increase their prejudice across differences in those situations (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002).

Thus, teachers must integrate students' backgrounds and story-sharing into their classroom communities, while also tackling power imbalances and guiding students to question the status quo and take action in the face of injustice. In order to do this, they must honor where the students are from, bringing their languages, discourses and funds of knowledge into the classroom dialogue. Furthermore, they should explicitly teach them how to navigate powerful discourses and participate actively in intercultural communication. There is not one method to do this, as the form of education for social justice is not predetermined; instead, it has to emerge from the context and community members' (students') priorities (Bucholtz et al., 2014).

Study Rationale

While social justice principles are addressed in TESOL preparation courses and students are expected to integrate these principles into their lesson plans and instruction, research exploring educational experiences and effective teaching practices for ELs demonstrates that teachers primarily focus on immediate language and content related needs and requirements, such as identifying and meeting language objectives, integrating four language skills, teaching academic vocabulary and others (Bartolomé, 2003; Dutro, 2005; Mize & Dantas-Whitney, 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). It is less common to focus specifically on social justice principles and how effectively they are embedded unless the goal of the lesson is to promote inclusion and social justice. This lack of attention to practical applications of social justice principles may be due to a number of reasons, such as teachers dealing with an overwhelming amount of crucial components in lesson planning and teaching; lacking a clear understanding and repertoires of practical activities grounded in social justice; and failing to recognize the need to focus on social justice principles across various subject areas.

There has been some research into teacher preparation programs and how they integrate culturally responsive and social justice pedagogy into their curricula, impacting teachers' self-awareness and social justice knowledge and classroom practices (Ruffin, 2016; Thieman, 2016), but these studies do not address lesson content. This current study, in contrast, examines the integration of social justice principles in lesson plans developed by teachers who did not have extensive social justice curricula built explicitly into their teacher preparation courses. The focus on lesson plans is a narrow lens that will allow for a deeper discussion of the components of social justice education not only in TESOL preparation, but across a wide variety of teacher preparation programs. This document analysis, explained below, explored the understanding of social justice principles and readiness to enact them in lessons among pre-service and in-service teachers, who are enrolled in the TESOL graduate degree programs. Furthermore, the study findings were used as a starting point to develop specific suggestions about the integration of social justice principles into teaching.

Methodology

Data Sources

The current study reports findings from a document analysis of 50 lesson plans developed by pre-service and in-service English as a second language (ESL) teachers who were pursuing a TESOL graduate degree (Initial License) at a university in the Northeast of the United States at the time of the study. The lesson plans were submitted as part of assignments in two courses: reading and writing for ELs and second language teaching and learning. Students usually take these courses during the first year of their TESOL program. The lesson plan assignment in the reading and writing course asked students to both integrate specific strategies for teaching reading and writing skills acquired in the course and ensure that speaking and listening skills were embedded in the lesson. Students submitted two of such lesson plans over the course of the semester: one lesson plan in the middle of the course semester and the other one towards the completion of the course. Lesson plans from both assignments were analyzed in this study. The lesson plan assignment in the second language teaching and learning course was due at the end of the semester.

It is noteworthy to mention that the lesson plan assignment in either of the courses did not explicitly ask students to integrate social justice principles. Social justice, however, was addressed on different occasions in the courses as part of classroom activities and in course materials. Moreover, students had multiple opportunities to practice analyzing, critiquing and reflecting on lesson plans as part of the instructor's demonstrations, groups work and whole class activities. During such activities, the course instructor drew students' attention to social justice issues in delivering the analyzed lessons, and opportunities for the integrations of social justice principles into the lesson plans were discussed.

In addition to course-specific directions for the lesson plan assignments, such as the inclusion of language objectives, the balance of four language skills and other elements, the expectation for the lesson plans was to ensure that they were authentic and included principles of good teaching practices acquired in TESOL courses and through experience. Furthermore, students were encouraged to provide thorough descriptions of lesson activities detailing both student and teacher actions in the lesson. As a final component of the lesson plan assignment, students were asked to write a commentary in which they reflected on their lessons self-evaluating their effectiveness and addressing additional considerations that they kept in mind for the lesson plan delivery. This commentary was included into the data analysis together with lesson plans and served as an additional data source that helped the researchers grasp important nuances about students' understanding of social justice and readiness to enact it in lessons.

Data Analysis

The document or documentary analysis method was utilized to examine lesson plans and construct understanding about students' readiness to effectively enact social justice principles in their teaching. This qualitative research technique is used to analyze documents that carry information about the phenomenon or issue under investigation (Bailey, 1994). Payne and Payne (2004) referred to document analysis as a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing and interpreting the content and context of documents.

Both researchers began the analysis with independent close reading and critical examination of the lesson components. This process was accompanied with thematic coding based on the rubric designed by the researchers and described below. The second phase of the analysis included

calibration, which allowed the researchers to compare and validate emerging themes in order to increase trustworthiness of the data. Similar to the independent analysis phase, the rubric was used during the collaborative data analysis phase.

During the independent and collaborative data analysis process, researchers were aware of the existence of possible but unintentional biases and positionality on their end that could impact their own interpretation of the lessons (Bourke, 2014). In order to minimize the potential biases, both researchers participated actively in a variety of social justice workshops among colleagues and engaged in identity activities with their students as part of the social justice curricula. They were both committed to social justice for all and were critical of curricula that marginalizes and excludes. Both researchers had disparate experiences with oppression personally, which contributed to their increased awareness of the ways in which these experiences might inform of critical realities and shield them from others. The rubric described below was developed in line with the idea of reducing the potential impact of biases and positionality of the researchers.

Rubric for Lesson Plan Analysis

The rubric, specifically designed for this study to analyze lesson plans for the inclusion of social justice oriented practices, is aligned with the *Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Biases Framework*, and reflects four key domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. This framework was developed as part of a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (1991) known as Teaching Tolerance, and is aimed at promoting K-12 education free of prejudice. The four domains, Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action, comprise twenty anchor standards, which can be used as a guide for curriculum development at every grade level. This comprehensive framework grounded in many years of work promoting anti-bias education and social justice was chosen for the analysis because it encompasses the crucial facets of social justice addressed in this article and specifies behaviors, skills and knowledge that students need to develop over the course of K-12 education.

The rubric comprises nine questions presented below with pertinent domains from the Teaching Tolerance Framework in parentheses:

1. Are multiple perspectives welcomed and respected? (Diversity; Identity)
2. Is curiosity about diversity encouraged? (Diversity)
3. Are self-reflection practices integrated into the lesson? (Identity)
4. Is story sharing included in the lesson? (Identity; Action)
5. Is dialogue part of the instruction? Are students taught explicitly how to engage in an empathetic, open-minded dialogue? (Diversity; Action)
6. Is there any indication of insensitivity to diversity or hidden stereotypes/bias in the lesson? (Justice)
7. Are students' prior learning experiences and background knowledge integrated? (Identity; Diversity). Is there an in-depth exploration of background knowledge/culture (avoiding oversimplification)?
8. Are form-focused instruction and learning strategies included into the lesson in order to provide access to academic learning communities and foster positive identity development? (Identity; Justice)
9. Does the lesson promote action against injustice? (Justice; Action)

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the data yielded four major themes: (1) Missed Opportunity for Connection; (2) Unstructured Dialogue; (3) Intention to Meet Linguistic Needs; and (4) Lack of Modeling of Intercultural Practices.

(1) Missed Opportunity for Connection

It was found through the coding process that pre-service and in-service ESL teachers were not always successful at connecting the lesson content and language that they planned to teach to students' backgrounds and prior learning. This theme is aligned with the Diversity, Identity and Justice domains of the *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) and was identified in the analysis based on the following questions in the rubric:

1. Are multiple perspectives welcomed and respected? (Diversity; Identity)
2. Is curiosity about diversity encouraged? (Diversity)
6. Is there any indication of insensitivity to diversity or hidden stereotypes/bias in the lesson? (Justice)
7. Are students' prior learning experiences and background knowledge integrated? (Identity; Diversity). Is there an in-depth exploration of background knowledge/culture (avoiding oversimplification)?

Most of the lesson plans included “missed” opportunities to introduce multiple perspectives and provide connections to ELs' backgrounds in the activator section, main body and/or homework assignments. The activator was a required component in the lesson plan assignment and was intended to encourage students to think about ways to connect new concept to students' lives and experiences. However, the analysis revealed that such connections, when provided, were usually shallow and one-sided reflecting only the dominant cultural perspective. For example, in one lesson plan designed for a group of 20 students including four students from Cape Verde, the teacher introduced weather patterns for different seasons as an example of “fact” versus “opinion” sentences. One example of a fact sentence was “The weather is 25F in the winter”. The lesson activator and the main body did not include any indication that the temperature is different in the winter depending on the region and/or country. There was a missed opportunity to ask Cape Verdean students to share what the weather is like in Cape Verde in the winter, which contrasts with the temperature in the Northeast of the U.S. As is evident, this example did not only fail to provide connections to EL students' experiences and background knowledge but also could create confusion among the Cape Verdean students who might have a different concept of the winter season, especially if they were newcomers. This could impact students' understanding of the “fact” concept, which was the topic of the lesson.

Another example that supports this theme was found in a lesson on school rules for 16 sixth-grade students among which there were six ELs. The lesson included a handout listing common school rules in the U.S.; however, it did not include any discussion of how school rules vary in different countries and contexts. Provided there are six ELs, such a discussion would create an opportunity for meaningful and engaging learning for all students in the classroom and would foster a safe environment welcoming multiple perspectives and ways of doing things. In order to engage students further, the teacher could create an activity asking students to identify similar and different rules among cultures and discuss them as a whole class. Finally, the teacher could allow students to choose rules from the ELs' cultures that they could add to the list and thus further reinforce the inclusion.

Such practices could also encourage curiosity among non-ELs and introduce them to a multiplicity of perspectives.

In each of the examples above, it is important to engage students in activities that extend beyond just an introduction and superficial discussion of diverse perspectives. Instead, the teacher should encourage students' in-depth, critical reflection leading them to develop a non-judgmental, respectful attitude to diversity, ensuring that all voices are heard.

(2) *Unstructured Dialogue*

The theme of Unstructured Dialogue is closely aligned with the finding discussed above and presents an important aspect of social justice oriented teaching. Interaction plays a crucial role in a classroom of ELs for a number of reasons. First, it provides meaningful opportunities for students to practice oral language skills and jointly develop an understanding about the lesson topic in the Zone of Proximal Development, which is found to have a significant impact on language attainment including all four language skills (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Second, structured classroom communication motivates cooperative learning and negotiation of meaning while providing all students with an opportunity to explore and practice respectful dialogue that welcomes various perspectives.

It is imperative to explicitly teach norms and rules of effective and productive classroom communication to all students who may have various degrees of familiarity with expectations for engaging and sustaining a respectful dialogue in a U.S. school setting. These differences may result in an inadequate participation in classroom oral exchange activities. For many students, this different cultural understanding is accompanied by a lack of English language skills necessary to engage in dynamic communicative activities with native speaking peers, creating an additional obstacle for dialogue opportunities.

This theme falls into with the Diversity and Action domains of *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016). The question in the Rubric that helped identify this theme was:

5. Is dialogue part of the instruction? Are students taught explicitly how to engage in an empathetic, open-minded dialogue?

All analyzed lessons included some indication of interaction opportunities. Nevertheless, oral communication activities were not always sufficiently structured, and essential rules and guidelines for engaging in a respectful dialogue were not explicitly addressed, modeled and practiced. In one lesson plan, a group discussion was included to serve as a prerequisite for the next step – writing an opinion essay. Each student was expected to express an opinion about his/her favorite season and explain why he/she thought that way. This phase was critical for developing students' understanding of the concept of opinion and how opinions, unlike facts, can vary among individuals. However, the lesson failed to include explicit explanation of how students should operate within a group to ensure that everyone felt comfortable expressing opinions. Such an explanation was particularly necessary in the context of the classroom where the lesson was taught due to a large proportion of ELs - 12 students out of 16 students were ELs.

In another lesson, 20 fourth graders including five ELs were expected to work in groups and discuss food color, texture, smell and taste. As part of this group activity, students needed to share which food they liked or disliked and why. Similar to the previously discussed lesson, there was a lack of teachers' modeling of ground rules of participating in a dialogue of this sort. Such modeling was essential in order to introduce variations among individual preferences and perceptions of food flavors and smells, which may drastically differ across cultures. What is considered spicy in one culture may be viewed as neutral in another culture. Such variations can lead to misunderstandings and reduce

productivity if the above rules are not in place. Without teaching conventions of respectful dialogue, EL students sharing knowledge based on their experiences may put themselves at risk and feel inadequate.

Yet another lesson was designed for a classroom of 18 seventh grade students among which four students were ELs. The lesson included an activity asking students to read each other's paragraphs in which they shared their interpretations of the moral conveyed in a story read earlier. As part of this activity, students needed to express agreement or disagreement with their peers' views and defend their positions. The teacher planned to scaffold reading of the story by introducing and explaining key vocabulary and engaging students in a discussion of various parts of the story. She also provided necessary linguistic supports with writing a paragraph to ELs who were at lower levels of English development. However, the lesson did not address expectations for the oral exchange activity encouraging students to encounter diverse opinions and respond to them appropriately. The insufficient structure of this communicative activity could put EL students at risk as they might lack conversational tools and linguistic skills necessary to sustain the discussion.

One important aspect of group interaction activities that is worth specific attention in a classroom of culturally and linguistically diverse students is grouping structures. The data analysis revealed that only some (roughly 1/3) lesson plans specified criteria for grouping configurations. Placing ELs in appropriate groups informed by students' levels of English proficiency, cultural backgrounds, personality characteristics and other criteria, is important as it can significantly affect the outcomes of a discussion activity in terms of student learning and the level of comfort working in a group.

(3) *Intention to Meet Linguistic Needs*

The third major finding is Intention to Meet Linguistic Needs. In order for ELs to be able to engage in higher-order thinking and fully participate in all class activities, it is critical that their language development is supported (Echevarría & Graves, 2010).

This theme relates to the Identity and Justice domains of the *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016). Students whose access to academic learning and the classroom community is restricted as a result of inadequate language instruction will be unable to develop positive social identities, and their membership in the learning community will be restricted. If learners do not have necessary linguistic skills to participate in learning tasks, their academic progress will be at risk. The question in the rubric that addressed this area is:

8. Are form-focused instruction and learning strategies included into the lesson in order to provide access to academic learning communities and foster positive identity development? (Identity; Justice)

Many of the lessons explored in this study included intent to differentiate based on English proficiency levels but did not have a clear structure for enacting the language instruction and leveled activities. The differentiation plan and supports for language learning were usually explained in the lesson context section and then referenced throughout the lesson. Some specific strategies and supports to appropriately teach English language were integrated into all of the lessons. For example, differentiated sentence frames, graphic organizers, group work activities, vocabulary instruction, differentiated writing activities and language assessments were included at various points during the lesson activities.

While there were many strategies and supports identified, the effectiveness of language instruction and activities was often unclear. For example, there was an intent to teach vocabulary, but instead of describing the specific method of vocabulary instruction, there was often just a general statement about the need to teach the words. For example, in one of the lessons, the teacher explained that her "lesson starts out in the domain of oral language, with students reviewing vocabulary and working with partners to verbalize what they've already learned about animal homes" without clearly

explaining how this vocabulary instruction would be structured. In order to meet the linguistic needs of ELs and thus ensure that they are able to participate fully in lessons, carefully structured vocabulary instruction that is differentiated according to proficiency levels is essential.

Furthermore, while all of the lessons included language objectives, many of them were not effectively structured and it was unclear whether there were activities that would meet and assess those language objectives as the lesson unfolded. For example in one lesson, the language objective was, “I will be able to list reasons why I like my favorite season”, but it was not clear whether the list would be shared orally or in writing. Then as the lesson went on, the process of creating a list of reasons for a favorite season was not clearly defined in the lesson activities and it did not seem to be assessed at any point. The assessment was instead focused on opinion writing and whether there were complete sentences and adequate reasons. In order to meet ELs’ linguistic needs, lessons need to have effective language objectives that are met through lesson activities; if this component is missing ELs’ ability to participate fully in the lesson will limit their access to curriculum.

Lastly, there were a variety of instances where learning strategies were mentioned, but it was not apparent whether the strategies were taught explicitly during the lesson. For example, as previously mentioned, while pair and group work activities were integrated into most lessons, the interaction rules and norms as well as the linguistic structures necessary for participation were often inadequately explained and structured. For example, in one lesson the teacher candidate explained that in the lesson activator, “The other students will be asked to discuss with a partner what they could do if they had those materials shown in the picture.” Not only was there no mention of how respectful communication would be fostered, but also there was inadequate support for lower levels of ELs to engage in the interaction.

Another example of inadequate explanation of a learning strategy refers to the integration of graphic organizers in the lessons. Graphic organizers were often mentioned as a tool for students to organize their information, but were not fully explicated to students. If students do not have experience with a particular graphic organizer (eg. a Venn diagram as was the case in a few lessons), then they have to first learn about how to use the graphic organizer in order for it to be helpful in their language and content learning. If graphic organizers have already been explained to students, then that should be mentioned in the lesson.

(4) Intercultural Practices Not Modelled

The last major theme aligns with the Identity and Action domains of the *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) and was generated based on the following questions from the rubric:

3. Are self-reflection practices integrated into the lesson? (Identity)
4. Is story sharing included in the lesson? (Identity; Action)
5. /.../ Are students taught explicitly how to engage in a empathetic, open-minded dialogue? (Diversity; Action)
10. Does the lesson promote action against injustice? (Justice; Action)

The lesson plan document analysis demonstrated that the teachers did not model intercultural practices across all the lesson plans. In addition to missing opportunities to connect with students’ backgrounds, as was described above, the teachers did not exhibit self-reflection, curiosity, openness and knowledge of multiple perspectives themselves in order to show students examples of what these practices looked like. It is possible that the teachers creating the lessons had yet to acquire intercultural experiences themselves and thus were not adept at bringing in multiple perspectives or modeling intercultural skills, underscoring the need to foster the development of critical intercultural

competence in teacher education courses. Another possibility for the inadequate modelling of intercultural practices or lack thereof in lessons is teachers' tendency to assume that intercultural competence develops naturally and is not worth lesson time and attention, or it is simply not part of the curriculum. In fact, it is known that intercultural competence development is a lifelong process that requires explicit teaching and scaffolding stimulating ongoing critical self-reflection and analysis (Bennett, 2009).

Thus, the teacher needs to enact intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviors himself/herself in order to be an exemplar of how an intercultural communicator should act like (Deardorff, 2006). For example, when the teacher introduces topics, there is almost always an opportunity to model and show awareness of multiple perspectives. At the beginning of one lesson, the teacher asked the students to discuss collectable items. Prior to having the students interact, the teacher could model self-reflection, explaining his/her thought process at this point, and then review examples that show awareness of multiple perspectives. The teacher could bring a cultural artifact to share with the class (e.g. international coins) that he/she collected and then explain how a friend or a classmate from another cultural background collected something completely different (e.g. tea cups), demonstrating the values, beliefs and traditions unique to that culture. Ideally, the teacher could share the actual objects or at least pictures of the objects. Then, the discussion among the students could follow from the teachers' examples. Rarely did the teacher share his/her own examples that exhibited an understanding and curiosity of multiple perspectives.

In addition to not sharing his/her own examples, the teacher expected the students to be the ones to bring in their diverse ideas and engage with one another without adequate scaffolding, which could inhibit students' exploration of multiple perspectives. It was the students' responsibility to structure this process, rather than having the teacher facilitate the learning experience for students. In some lessons, the teacher asked students to share their own stories, but did not explicitly structure the conversation to elicit a respectful, in-depth exploration of background knowledge. In one lesson, a teacher described how the group sharing would occur by stating, "They will one by one share one of their brainstormed words by standing up and acting it out, a fun way to get moving and share their ideas with the class, as well as providing the possibility for culturally diverse students to show a quick glimpse into something children do or experience during a certain season where they are from." This fun "quick glimpse" was not a sufficient explanation of a lesson activity that could foster an inclusive environment and a productive conversation across cultures.

Furthermore, another way to model intercultural competence is to ask follow up questions, respond to the nuances of students' ideas and design various opportunities for them to share their work. Throughout the lessons, there were many points when the teacher would ask the students to do an activity and then share out to the whole group, without modelling respectful communication prior to or during the activity. The teacher could first ask follow-up questions to the students, demonstrating what intercultural curiosity looks like in practice. Then, the teacher could encourage the students to ask one another similar questions before sharing with the whole group.

Finally, none of the lesson plans included examples or practices of how students could plan and carry out individual and collective action against prejudice and injustice. It was not surprising that the action domain was missing as the other components of social justice, such as self-reflection, awareness about diversity and respect, which serve as prerequisite steps for action, were not emphasized. These elements must be properly scaffolded in order to guide students in developing an in-depth and genuine understanding about critical nuances of diversity, which can enable students to recognize their responsibility to stand up to injustice and develop an active stance with regard to exclusion, bias and oppression in the local and global community. Such complex competencies are not a matter of one lesson or unit. Instead, it may take months or rather years to ingrain these principles in students' repertoires. Therefore, it is essential to introduce students to issues of diversity

early in their academic experiences and reinforce crucial social justice aspects throughout their school years.

Limitations and Future Directions

There were a number of limitations in the study methodology that need to be acknowledged. Lesson plans were the only source of data that was used in the analysis of teachers' understanding of social justice principles and readiness to enact them in the classroom. It is worth mentioning, however, that the lesson plan assignment specifically asked to provide thorough descriptions of lesson activities including student and teacher roles. In addition to the lesson plan, teachers wrote a commentary reflecting on the effectiveness of their lesson plans, potential challenges and other considerations.

The depth of the lesson description and the commentary were valuable for the analysis in the study of this scope. Nevertheless, researchers acknowledge the need to conduct a more comprehensive investigation of this issue in order to understand potential weaknesses in teacher education programs with regard to preparing effective teachers who are ready to enact pedagogy for social justice. Thus, in addition to lesson plans, actual classroom observations, in which these lesson plans are used, need to be included. Such observations could yield interesting findings about critical intercultural issues in the classroom.

Furthermore, teachers' reflection collected through interviews or focus groups could contribute to understanding their thinking and decision making process when they plan a lesson and enact social justice principles in their teaching. Researchers did not have data about the participants' identity groups. Knowing about the groups students identify with and their experiences of oppression might have contributed to the ways in which researchers were able to analyze their lesson plans. For a future research study, exploring how teachers' identities could inform their integration of social justice standards would be a worthwhile investigation.

Finally, it was beyond the scope of this study to look at similar teacher preparation programs at other universities in the U.S. However, in order to construct a nuanced understanding about teachers' readiness to serve as social justice advocates in American schools as well as gauge the quality of teacher education programs with this regard across the U.S., it is necessary to examine similar programs at colleges and universities in different parts of the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The document analysis suggests that a variety of teacher education programs, such as early literacy, elementary and secondary education, TESOL, special education, educational leadership and other teacher preparation programs, should include social justice orientations as required components in the curriculum. The inclusion of this sort must go beyond mere discussion of issues of injustice and the importance of welcoming diversity in the classroom. Rather it must be structured in a way that teachers develop a thorough understanding of social justice principles and acquire tools necessary for enacting them in their practices. Such competencies can evolve if teachers are engaged and guided through activities stimulating critical thinking, reflection, analysis of issues of diversity and implementation of social justice principles across teaching contexts.

Consistent with prominent models of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006) and critical intercultural communication (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010), self-reflection practices leading teachers to the awareness of their own identities and readiness to act as social justice agents must be included as they become educators committed to social justice. Such reflection activities must be systematic, in-depth, deliberately planned and relevant to teacher' experiences. When teachers are aware of their own identities and orientations, and their role in structural and systemic inequity, they can relate to

others (their students), comparing and contrasting their characteristics, and embracing the multiplicity of perspectives. With this foundation in place, it is essential to present teacher candidates with case studies, real-life examples of individuals or contexts and experiential activities in which identities are put at risk due to blatant or hidden injustice.

Another crucial recommendation for programs grounded in social justice, and supported by the findings of this study, is introducing practical strategies that instructors can use across pedagogical contexts to create socially just education climates. One fundamental practical strategy that has been found to be crucial for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students is including form and meaning focused instruction across all content areas, ensuring equitable access to the academic curricula (Short & Echevarría, 2016; Tomita & Spada, 2013). Such an explicit focus on linguistic demands is essential as it lays the foundation for a socially just learning environment.

Among other practical strategies is modeling a structured and respectful classroom dialogue that welcomes diverse opinions and promotes collaborative learning. Instructors in teacher preparation programs need to structure discussions in a way that all students feel heard and know how to listen to others as well as possess necessary group discussion skills. Some of such skills are: do not interrupt, avoid judgment, use appropriate academic language when disagreeing, do not monopolize the discussion, etc. In K-12 teacher preparation, it is essential that teachers learn and practice how to enact such strategies through lesson plan assignments, practicum activities, and community service across the program curriculum. A special emphasis in teacher preparation needs to be placed on promoting individual and collective action against injustice, the component that was not identified in the findings of this study.

The research implications suggested above extend beyond teacher education programs to a variety of academic disciplines. All teaching and learning situations regardless of the academic field include opportunities for faculty and students to interact across differences and enact social justice principles. In addition to linguistic and cultural diversity discussed in this article, the same social justice principles should be applied with regard to other diversity characteristics that comprise an individual identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, among others, which are present on every university and college campus. In such contexts, it is critical that a diversity approach be replaced by a social justice approach which underscores the role that inequities play in all interactions, particularly in teaching and learning contexts where there is a heightened amount of communication on critical topics (Adams & Zuniga, 2016).

Based on our findings, all faculty across academic discipline should engage in self-reflection practices and explore their own identities as a fundamental initial step in understanding their own roles and responsibilities in the multicultural context. Such self-reflection will also enhance faculty's understanding of power imbalances in the classroom, helping them facilitate equitable classroom dynamics (Bell, Goodman & Varghese, 2016). Furthermore, they should strive to acquire practical strategies that they can use to enact social justice principles in the classroom context. Finally, faculty across various disciplines should model respectful dialogue, freedom of opinions and safe collaborative environment on a daily basis in their classes. In order to make teaching and learning more equitable, providing opportunities for all students to be included and to be able to express themselves, it is essential that instructors connect with their students, provide structure to intercultural dialogue and model intercultural practices. For faculty in higher education, there should be enhanced professional development opportunities that allow for sharing of ideas among faculty and an opportunity to explore and practice these inclusive strategies. Moreover, the university climate in general must be conducive to promoting respect to cultural diversity and implementing such social justice driven practices.

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