Culturally Responsive Differentiated Instruction: Narrowing Gaps Between Best Pedagogical Practices Benefiting All Learners

by Lorri J. Santamaria — 2009

Background/Context: *Because of its special education association, differentiated instruction (DI) is a topic of concern for many educators working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, whereby bilingual, multicultural, and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is considered more appropriate for responding to cultural and linguistic diversity. Furthermore, although the literature base on DI recognizes cultural and linguistic diversity, it offers little in terms of ways to address these differences.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *The focus of this contribution is to assist the educational community in recognizing pedagogical differences, while finding common ground, in identifying complementary teaching practices for all students, including culturally diverse students and English language learners (ELLs). CRT and DI provide frameworks with which to discuss a reconciliation of both theory-to-practice approaches with the hope that a common framework will better serve educators and preservice teachers working with diverse students in complex multidimensional classrooms.*

Setting: *This research took place at two CLD elementary schools serving ELLs in North San Diego County, California. Schools were chosen because both are reaching high levels of academic achievement and are closing achievement gaps, dispelling the myth that high levels of poverty and/or CLD student populations lead to lower student achievement.*

Research Design: *The research design employed was a qualitative case study.*

Data Collection and Analysis: *Over 5 years, observations, recorded conversations among teachers, administrators, students, and parents, and supporting documents collected from both schools were initially coded by researchers reading through responses and documents. Using a qualitative analysis procedure, codes were generated to identify data relevant to general features of DI and CRT. This was followed by more focused coding wherein previous codes were reviewed, erroneous information was eliminated, and smaller codes were then combined into larger ones. Finally, codes were organized into larger themes identified and grounded by DI and CRT literature.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: The best teaching practices are those that consider all learners in a classroom setting and pay close attention to differences inherent to academic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. Through a closer examination of two different, seemingly distinct, theoretical models that have rarely been linked or reconciled, educators may be able to determine what is appropriate for particular groups of students in particular classrooms in particular locales. In implementing school reform efforts to improve student achievement, reconciliation of best teaching practices and the creation of hybrid pedagogies are critical in addressing a future of an increasingly diverse country and global community.

INTRODUCTION

Challenges inherent in serving many students with different needs (e.g., academic, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, or otherwise) have been the preoccupation of educators since the identification of academic achievement gaps in research studies and by school districts. These gaps continue to be a focus in newspapers, magazines, lay literature, and scholarly journals and have resulted in the development of school reform efforts including gifted programs, response to intervention (RTI) models, and individualized education plans (IEPs). Students who need additional academic assistance are provided with remedial academic programs like resource classrooms, Open Court (phonics-based reading program), and specific curricular federally initiated interventions (e.g., Reading First). English language learners (ELLs) are further supported by bilingual, dual-language immersion, and English as a second language (ESL) programs. In addition, educationally disadvantaged students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are entitled to federal and state assistance programs (e.g., Title I; free and reduced lunch).

Though federal and state-funded programs have directly given support to students from specific backgrounds, the notion of cultural diversity has not been directly addressed and is the one difference that overlaps with and impacts each of the other categories identified. Cultural difference is the single most pervasive difference in U.S. schools and until the early 1970s, by multicultural education, the most neglected. This lack of attention to the needs of a growing number of students has caused educators to embark on a series of discussions, including this article, to address culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners. These discussions must include ELLs because primary language instruction programs (e.g., bilingual education) serving ELL needs are challenged and have been restructured in the aftermath of the successful passage of English-only legislation in states including California and Arizona.

Differentiated instruction (DI) is one way that educators have recently begun to provide academic instruction to children with special needs mainstreamed into general education classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999, 2000). Conversely, *culturally responsive teaching* (CRT) is a collection of best teaching practices to enhance the academic success of students who are culturally different in classroom settings (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001). What the two approaches have in common is that they are both designed to provide

support for groups of students who have been historically unsuccessful in mainstream general education classrooms for a variety of reasons. However, discussions around DI and CRT have three important tensions between them that make them worthy of scholarly consideration.

First, DI comes out of special education research and practice, in which CLD learners have been historically misdiagnosed, misidentified, and, as a result, sometimes overrepresented in programs serving students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, speech/ language impairments); conversely, CLD learners have been underrepresented in gifted education programs (Artiles & Trent, 1997; Obiakor, 2007; Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000).

Second, educators and researchers who work to serve needs of children of African, indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, bi/multiracial, or Latin American descent with pedagogical practices such as CRT do not want CLD students to be confused with learners with disabilities (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Delpit, 1995). Therefore, these professionals who practice CRT may hail DI as good teaching while simultaneously rejecting the special education connotations currently associated with the practice.

Finally, although academically diverse students (e.g., learning disabled, gifted) and CLD learners have "special" needs and, in some cases, benefit from similar kinds of instruction, there are profound differences between children for whom DI instruction was targeted in the past and those children for whom the practice seems appropriate today. That is, over time, DI has evolved from serving gifted learners to providing support to children with high-incidence disabilities and, more recently, to teaching all learners from culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse backgrounds within the current context of the general education classroom (Berger, 1991; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Van Tassel-Baska, 1989; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998).

This contribution to the discussion of DI and its applications for CLD learners in general education classrooms begins by considering definitions and origins, practical applications, academic products, and theoretical frameworks, followed by gaps in the research and literature. This same discussion will be duplicated for CRT. These two considerations will provide a framework with which to discuss a reconciliation of the two theory-to-practice approaches with the hope that a common framework will better serve educators and preservice teachers working with diverse students in complex multidimensional classrooms. The focus of this work is to assist the educational community in recognizing pedagogical differences, while finding common ground, in identifying complementary teaching practices for all students, including culturally diverse and ELLs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

DIFFERENTIATIED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated instruction defined
Differentiation can best be described as a group of common theories and practices acknowledging student differences in background knowledge, readiness, language, learning style, and interests, resulting in individually responsive teaching appropriate to particular student needs (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998; Vaughn et al., 2000). Differentiated instruction (DI), sometimes referred to as mixed-ability teaching, is a process-oriented approach most suitable to classrooms in which students have a wide range of ability levels (Heacox, 2001; Winebrenner, 1992). The approach is rigorous, relevant, flexible, and varied while intended to meet students at personal instructional levels in efforts to maximize growth resulting in individual success (Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Santamaría & Thousand, 2004).
Upon closer inspection, professionals working in education may contend that DI has borrowed liberally from the work of well-known scholarship (e.g., Bloom 1956; Bruner, 1966; Taba, 1962). These seminal works informing DI include scholarship on gifted education practices, multiple intelligences theories, brain research, and, to some degree, bilingual and multicultural education (Banks et al., 2001; Gardner, 1983, 1995, 1999; Van Tassel-Baska, 1992). Recognition of student differences and the response to them are socially constructed phenomena. As a result, DI is considered as much a philosophical orientation as it is a best teaching practice or theory.

Differentiated instruction and best teaching practices

As early as 1982, educational researchers studying gifted learners in special education settings acknowledged the importance of recognizing unique characteristics of students when making decisions as to how the curriculum should be modified (Feldhusen, 1989, 1993; Feldhusen, Hansen, & Kennedy, 1989; Maker, 1982). More recently, according to Carol Ann Tomlinson, who writes about DI in general education classrooms, differentiation is characterized by the modification of three elements: content, process, and product (2001). These same elements were identified earlier by June Maker (1982), who later wrote about their application to gifted Latino and Native American students in the Southwest United States (Maker & Schiever, 1989). Additionally, Maker's research findings indicated the need to modify the school environment to allow for connections between school experiences and students' greater world in support of CLD gifted learners (Maker & Nielson, 1996).

In Tomlinson's (1999) conceptualization of DI (which does not include environmental modifications) *content* refers to materials used to support instructional subject matter, approaches to outlining tasks and objectives to goals, and beliefs that instruction is concept focused and principle driven. Access to content is the central goal, as is alignment to state standards and high-stakes standardized tests. Content addresses teaching the same concepts with all students while providing adjustments to the degree of complexity for the academic diversity of learners. For example, students with more

ability may be working on synthesis or application of a concept, whereas students who find curriculum content challenging may be working with definitions, comparisons/contrasts, or summarizations of the same concepts.

Process considerations focus on the use of cooperative groups that enable students to work together to maximize and stimulate their learning and that of others in the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Opportunities for group interactions are a critical part of DI, based on research that has determined that homogenous grouping supports more advanced learners (Allan, 1991; Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Oakes, 1985, 1990; Slavin, 1990). In most conceptions of DI, a variety of deliberate grouping strategies are used depending on content, student projects, and ongoing evaluations to ensure the engagement and success of all learners. Students are expected to interact with one another and work together as they develop content knowledge regardless of ability level, with all learners participating and being challenged appropriately.

Designing and managing DI can be a challenging task because students work at many levels and at varying paces. To this end, Tomlinson (2001) has suggested strategies that teachers can use to effectively maintain and manage classrooms within a DI framework. Whereas in the past, differentiation did not focus on assessment (Berger, 1991; Maker, 1982; Van-Tassel-Baska, 1989), *product* currently includes initial and ongoing assessment of student readiness and of student goals, with the focus on learners who are active and responsible (Tomlinson, 1999, 2000; Vaughn et al., 2000). Product also expects and requires students' active engagement in classrooms in which they are working on the same content with varying tasks at different levels. Testing students prior to content introduction, coupled with ongoing assessment, enables teachers to provide an appropriate menu of choices and scaffolds within the many needs, interests, and abilities of students in an academically diverse classroom. Appropriate student product also allows numerous means of expression and alternative procedures (Berger), as well as varying degrees of difficulty, types of evaluation, and scoring for a wide range of student ability levels. Therefore, products vary as a result of DI, depending on what students are actually able to accomplish.

Theoretical framework

Brain research and multiple intelligence theory provide the most salient theoretical foundation for DI. Brain research responds to a variety of student academic readiness skills, interests, and learning profiles, whereas multiple intelligence theory embraces the notion of recognizing different kinds of "smart" (Gardner, 1999; Kalbfleisch, 1987).

To provide an anchor for the "how-to" and more practical application of DI, Tomlinson (1998, 2000, 2001, 2003) has identified five guidelines situated within a framework with the goal of making differentiation possible for general education classroom teachers to attain The first guideline is clarification and focus of key concepts and generalizations. This type of content-based clarification ensures that all learners acquire deep foundational understandings of academic material being presented. The second guideline is the use of assessments as teaching tools to extend (rather than merely measure)

instruction before, during (process), and after learning takes place (product). Emphasizing critical and creative thinking in global lesson design is the third guideline, which includes process-based student support as needed. This is followed by the fourth guideline, which involves the process of engaging all learners within a variety of learning tasks. The final guideline refers to providing a balance between teacher-assigned and student-selected (process) tasks based on assessment data (product). Application of some combination of these guidelines is suggested by the author, depending on students' needs and instructional decisions regarding content, process, and product. These guidelines are useful in looking for manifestations of DI in classrooms and serve as a reference to compare differentiation with other teaching methods in the discussion of this article. Table 1 illustrates ways in which content, process, and product relate to each other conceptually (Tomlinson, 1995, 1999, 2000).

Table 1: Differentiated Instruction: Elements and Guidelines

Elements of Differentiated Instruction	Guidelines for Implementing Differentiated Instruction
Content -Supporting instructional subject matter - Providing central access -Aligning tasks, instructional goals, and objectives to high-stakes standardized tests -Adjusting by degree of complexity for academic diversity of learners	Clarifying key concepts and generalizations
Process -Using flexible grouping and appropriate classroom management -Variety of grouping strategies depending on content, student projects, and evaluations -Students interacting with one another and working together developing content regardless of ability level	Emphasizing critical and creative thinking Engaging all learners Maintaining a balance between teacher-assigned and student-selected tasks
Product -Initial and ongoing assessment of student readiness and goals -Expectations and requirements for student response (expected in classrooms where students work on the same content with varying tasks at different levels)	Using assessment as a teaching tool

As important elements of brain research and multiple intelligence theory—which, incidentally, also provide the foundation for sheltered English instruction for ELLs—DI describes the use of scaffolds to support student learning. Thus, some of the theoretical roots of DI can be linked to constructivism and, more specifically, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), wherein students are capable of more than expected when working at more difficult levels with appropriate scaffolding or support. This support can come from more capable peers, teachers, or materials and is used to complement the content, process, and product dimensions of DI to maximize student outcomes for learners with varying degrees of proficiency (Santamaría, Fletcher, & Bos, 2002). There is a substantial body of more current research documenting the benefits of scaffolded instruction for CLD learners and descriptions of students working within their ZPDs in a variety of learning environments (Cole, 1996; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Morelli, Rogoff, Angelillo, 2003; Santamaría et al., 2002). These contributions further substantiate this important and transcendent aspect of DI, linking it to multicultural education practices.

Gaps in DI literature and research

A review of the literature on DI recognizes that instruction can and should be modified for CLD learners. In responding to the needs of classroom diversity in which equity is associated with historically marginalized groups (e.g., ELLs and CLD learners) and excellence is associated with their mainstream peers, Tomlinson (2003) stated,

Schools must belong to all of these children. Educators often speak of equity as an issue with children of the former group and excellence as an issue for the latter. In truth, equity and excellence must be at the top of the agenda for all children. . . . We cannot achieve excellence for children at risk of school failure without emphatically, systematically, vigorously, and effectively seeing the development of their full potential. (p. 67)

Tomlinson, understanding and recognizing the importance of addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, continued,

You can only care for the child when you understand—what it is like to be part of that child's culture, what it is like to be unable to speak the language of the classroom, what it is like to go home to a shelter every night . . . you can only do that [connect with learners' interests] when you know what they care about, what they do that gives them joy, what they would wish for if they dared. (p. 67)

From the very beginning, with its roots in gifted education, DI recognized individual student difference. Pioneer researchers like Maker and Nielson (1986) even sought ways to change assessment for the identification of underrepresented CLD learners in gifted education. Tomlinson certainly carries this spirit and sentiment. What differentiation academicians fail to do, however, is provide practitioners with specific guidelines and strategies on how to differentiate instruction for ELL and other CLD learners to support their academic success. This gap provides the impetus for the current work and sets the pedagogical stage for a closer look at ways in which culturally responsive pedagogy may

serve as a bridge to offer improved teaching practices for CLD learners in the differentiated classroom.

PRINCIPLES FOR BEST TEACHING PRACTICES FOR CLD LEARNERS

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) defined

CRT is a way of teaching used to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by the use of cultural references that impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Valerie Ooka Pang (2005) added that "CRT is an approach to instruction that responds to the sociocultural context and seeks to integrate the cultural content of the learner in shaping an effective learning environment" (p. 336). Teachers who use this approach understand ways in which it makes their teaching more effective (King, 1994).

In the early 1970s, responding to increasing classroom diversity in the United States, educational researchers encouraged classroom teachers to use their students' language and culture as resources rather than viewing them as barriers to learning (Abrahams & Troike, 1972). Other researchers suggested the need for teachers to revisit their own cultural orientations and preconceived notions of CLD learners (Aragon, 1973; Cuban, 1972). The hope was that teachers would critically question their own understandings of diversity appropriately to better meet the unique needs of their students, restoring dignity and pride along the way. Early work by Banks (1975), Forbes (1973), and Gay (1975) resulted in the call for schools to change existing curriculum practices, including specific ways to incorporate cultural and linguistic diversity within the curriculum for all content areas. These changes, it was asserted, would result in ethnic content serving the purpose of "bringing academic tasks from the realm of the alien and the abstract into experiential frames of reference" for all students (Gay, p. 181).

A sociocultural foundation lies at the heart of CRT. This is evidenced in research findings on learners of Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, African American, Native American, and Native Hawaiian descent (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Irvine, 2002; Litton, 1999; McCarty, 2002; Moll, 1992). Research findings in each case point to evidence that strongly suggests socioculturally centered teaching, when traditional and nontraditional methods for measuring academic achievement are used, results in varying degrees of improved student achievement (Gay, 2000). Assisting learners within their ZPD is attained by the use of interactive teaching strategies developed with students' ethnic identities, home languages, and cultural backgrounds in mind. Of the utmost importance is the nonimposition of a cultural hegemony that is espoused in all CRT approaches described (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Moll, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Geneva Gay (2000) identified six descriptive characteristics of CRT that have been consistent with those offered by other multicultural researchers (Banks & Banks, 2004; Chamot, 1995; Forbes, 1973; Fung, 1998; Jordan, 1995; King, 1994; Litton, 1999; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Researchers state that culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and

emancipatory. These characteristics have been helpful in identifying, discussing, and improving CRT for practitioners and researchers alike.

Culturally responsive teaching and best teaching practices

Gloria Ladson-Billings's (2001) current research in teacher education programs follows eight preservice teachers through their teacher preparation programs in the author's quest to identify the best ways to support teachers to teach for diversity. From her findings, several factors make instructional practices culturally responsive to the needs of student learners. These include indicators of academic achievement, indicators of cultural competence, and indicators of sociopolitical consciousness. The first set of characteristics that Ladson-Billings (2001) identified includes indicators of academic achievement. These are present in classrooms where teachers believe that all students are capable of learning; where teachers explain what achievement is in the context of their classrooms; where teachers know content, the students, and how to teach content to students; where teachers support the development of students' critical conscience toward the curriculum; and where teachers encourage academic achievement as a multidimensional concept.

The second set comprises indicators of cultural competence. These indicators determine how teachers can improve their teaching practices. They include teachers' understanding of culture and the role of culture in education; teachers taking responsibility for learning about students' culture and community; the teachers' use of their students' culture as a foundation for learning; and teachers' support of the flexible use of students' local and global culture.

The last indicators are those of sociopolitical consciousness, as associated with issues of social justice. These include teachers' knowledge of the larger sociopolitical context of the school, community, nation, and world; teachers' investment in the public good; teachers' development of academic experiences that connect students' perspectives to the larger social context; and teachers' understanding that their students' success will lead to an improved quality of life. These indicators provide a framework with which to consider other aspects of CRT and to compare CRT to DI (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Research findings on work with ELLs and their families reveal validated community knowledge; stronger relationships between students, families, and teachers; enhanced teaching-learning processes; reinforced teacher commitment; and classrooms where educational excellence is supported as a result of Funds of Knowledge classroom applications, specifically those that focus on family involvement (González et al., 1993; Moll et al., 1992).

From observing classrooms where CRT has taken place, Ladson-Billings (1994, 2001) has observed academic achievement, cultural competence, sociopolitical consciousness, and active teaching methods, including teacher as facilitator, student-controlled classroom discourse, and positive perspectives on parents and families of CLD learners. Cultural sensitivity and reshaping the curriculum to embed high expectations are other results of CRT as observed by Ladson-Billings (1994). Adding to the positive results of

CRT, Gay (2000) found that this kind of teaching validates learners by incorporating their cultures and frames of reference into existing curriculum, thereby lifting the "veil" of authority assumed by the historical renditions of the way that "truth" has been taught in U.S. schools up until now. Table 2 shows the ways in which Gay's (2000) descriptive characteristics of CRT and Moll's Funds of Knowledge (1990, 1992) relate to Ladson-Billings's (2001) indicators in relation to teacher behaviors in classrooms with CLD learners.

Table 2: Comparison of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Indicators of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2001)	Descriptive Characteristics of CRT (Gay, 2000)	Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992)
Academic achievement Teacher: 1. Presumes students capable. 2. Delineates achievement in classroom context. 3. Knows content, learner, and learners' style. 4. Supports curricular critical consciousness. 5. Encourages academic achievement. (p. 74)	**CRT is empowering** Teacher encourages academic competence, personal competent, courage, and the will to act (p. 32). **CRT is transformative** Teacher recognizes existing strength and accomplishments of students and enhancing them further in the instructional process (p. 33).	1. Teachers **identify knowledge, skills, and practices** that enable modest-income families to live their lives. 2. Teaching **learning process is improved**. 3. **Educational excellence** supported.
Cultural competence Teacher: 1. Understands culture and role of culture in education. 2. Takes responsibility for learning about students' culture and community. 3. Uses students' culture as basis for learning. 4. Promotes flexible use of students' local and global cultures (p. 97).	**CRT is validating** Teacher uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of CLD learners to make learning more relevant and effective (p. 29). **CRT is comprehensive** Teachers teach the whole child (p. 30). **CRT is multidimensional** Teachers make use of encompassing curriculum, content, learning contexts, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments (p. 31).	1. Teachers **enter students' homes as learners,** conducting household interviews and observations. 2. Later, **teachers reflect on the meaning** of their findings. 3. Teachers **collaborate to devise appropriate teaching** practices. 4. **Relationships between students' families and teachers are strengthened**
Sociopolitical consciousness Teacher: 1. Knows larger sociopolitical context (school, community, nation, world).	**CRT is emancipatory** Teacher lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truths typically taught in schools (p. 35).	1. Teachers **reexamine practices** in terms of their influence on student participation. 2. Teacher **commitments are**

2. Has investment in public good.

3. Plans and implements academic experiences.

4. Believes students' success has consequences in teacher's life (p. 120).

reinforced.

3. **Community knowledge is validated**.

In addition to key features and characteristics of CRT summarized in Table 2, heterogeneous cooperative grouping is a common best teaching practice associated with culturally responsive teaching. From research findings presented in her book *Dreamkeepers,* Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) describes cooperative learning as one of the key teaching methods implemented by African American teachers working successfully with African American students to improve academic achievement. As described by other research studies that focus on the benefits of cooperative groups, cooperative learning is seen as enabling students to work together to maximize and stimulate learning for all group members (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Student-centered instruction is fundamental to CRT, and it is this notion that drives socially mediated learning, one aspect of cooperative groups (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Goldstein, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, cooperative groups foster opportunities for students to learn from a variety of people, including teachers, peers, and other school community members (Santamaría et al., 2002).

From their research in working with Latino students, Rivera and Zehler (1991) found that student-centered work in cooperative groups creates interdependence among students and teachers. Adding to important findings by Padron, Waxman, and Rivera (Padron & Rivera, 1999, Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), this development of interdependence through cooperative learning, although appropriate for all students, is even more critical for ELLs and Latinos who may face socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural disadvantages in an educational system created for the mainstream population. These authors suggest that "through collaborative practices, they [ELLs] can develop the social skills and inter-group relations essential to academic success" (Padron et al.).

These examples demonstrate why heterogeneous grouping is favored within CRT pedagogy. Heterogeneous groups enable students to learn in different ways or share viewpoints and perspectives in given situations based on their own cultural and social experiences; active participation and learning are the net result (Nieto, 2004).

There are some who assert, however, that tracking and homogeneous grouping are best practices for higher achieving students in mainstream settings (Allan, 1991; Slavin, 1986, 1990). These claims have yet to be supported in the research on classroom grouping practices, which clearly states that heterogeneous grouping does not limit academic achievement of the academically talented and that all students benefit from heterogeneous grouping practices (Weinstein, 1996). What is clear, however, is that

students disproportionately placed in low-ability groups or tracks do not benefit from homogeneous groups (Golnick & Chinn, 2004).

Theoretical framework

Culturally responsive teaching can be considered one way to meet the needs of all learners, a core multicultural principle (Golnick & Chinn, 2004). CRT affirms students' cultures, viewing them as transformative and emancipatory strengths (rather than deficits); incorporates students' cultures in the teaching process, thus empowering them to take ownership of their learning; and leads to increased future participation in societal activities. In terms of questioning hegemonic practices and participatory democratic transformation from one's own educational experience, critical pedagogy can be considered the most broad theoretical foundation of CRT (Freire, 1985). CRT acknowledges that student achievement is influenced by home and community cultures by ways in which these attributes play out in learners' educational, sociopolitical, and historical contexts. In short, CRT is based on the premise that culture profoundly influences the ways in which children learn (Smith, 1998).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2001) calls her theoretical framework "culturally relevant pedagogy" (p. 144). She bases this framework on the propositions that successful teachers (1) focus on students' academic achievement, (2) develop students' cultural competence, and (3) foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Ladson-Billings used these three propositions to guide her study of eight teachers to identify the indicators of CRT found in the first column of Table 2. Geneva Gay (2000), on the other hand, takes a more global theoretical perspective when it comes to CRT. She looks to a sense of "story" for assertions about CLD learners in schools, the power of caring for these children, and the power of relationship building in teaching them. Gay also focused on mediated discourse, including dialectical variance, the importance of cultural congruence, and shifting paradigms of practice when teaching. Gay's findings serve as the theoretical foundations on which to expand and enhance teaching practices of those working with CLD learners (see Table 2, column 2). Vygotskian ideology and sociocultural notions of an inquiry-oriented approach to professional development are where Moll and associates find their theoretical basis (Table 2, column 3). This latter extension of culturally responsive teaching seeks to improve participation and increase learner interest by drawing on students' homes and communities as resources as the essence of CRT (González et al., 1993; Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990).

Gaps in culturally responsive teaching research and literature

Although the guiding principles and descriptions of CRT are inclusive and comprehensive in terms of CLD students, they fall short of specifically recognizing those with varying levels of English language development (ELD). In the United States, this is unfortunate because many children who come from culturally diverse backgrounds enter classrooms with a second or third language. CRT's emphasis on culture without much attention to linguistic difference is important to acknowledge because it is students' language acquisition that is often the principal source of misunderstanding in schools.

This misunderstanding can result in frequent special education misdiagnoses and inappropriate placement in high-incidence disability support settings, such as speech and language and/or resource specialist programs. For ELLs, assessment to determine eligibility for special education services is often in the form of English language proficiency and acculturation tests by default (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Obiakor, 2007). In many cases, these assessments have been found to be culturally biased and result in inaccurate and inappropriate special education placement of other CLD learners, independent of language difference (Obiakor).

Moll and his colleagues (1990, 1992) make the most mention of language in their valuable contributions to CRT. In this work, linguistic competence is referred to when teachers become more culturally proficient by conducting household interviews and making observations by way of visiting students' homes (Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). The only way for teachers to tap into the Funds of Knowledge of ELLs with Spanish-speaking parents or caregivers, however, is if researchers are able to speak the first language of their students and families. The identification of this deficit in CRT pedagogy and theory is important because it sheds light on an area in which development is needed if educators are to serve all CLD learners (Santamaría, 2003).

NARROWING GAPS BETWEEN DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING WITH COMPLEMENTARY PEDAGOGY FOR ALL LEARNERS

Up front and in keeping with the sociopolitical, historical, and educational context in which educators teach and learn, Tomlinson (2003) acknowledged that DI needs to be modified to respond to the needs of CLD learners. Because of this need, she supports ESL instruction for children learning English. Typically, though, DI addresses student diversity in terms of learners' academic differences (i.e., abilities, levels of readiness, learning profiles) with strategies and pedagogy responsive to cognitive differences. In the DI literature, there is some attention given to students' prior knowledge, talents, and cultural and linguistic diversity, but these differences are not the central focus of the teaching approach (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003).

When reviewing current scholarly contributions featuring DI, a shift in language can be noted that appears to be responsive to growing numbers of CLD students in U.S. schools (Guild & Garger, 1998; Hollaway, 2000; Strong, Perini, Silver, & Thomas, 2004; Theroux; 2001; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). Academia is beginning to respond to the apparent needs of CLD students in inclusive classrooms in order to discuss detracking and to address the needs of diverse student populations with responsive, personalized, and differentiated classrooms (Tomlinson, 2000; Tomlinson & Allan).

The most current work along these lines speaks to the wide diversity found in classrooms. Notable extensions include specific content, internationalism, and reference to excellence and equity in response to student differences (Strong et al., 2004; Theroux, 2001; Tomlinson, 2001; 2003). Though DI terminology is beginning to sound contemporary and sensitive to the needs of all learners, its foundation and core—a focus on responding

to academic diversity—has not changed. This is evidenced by the acknowledgement of diversity without a concomitant shift in pedagogical practices that would benefit CLD learners, including ELLs at varying levels of English acquisition.

Although DI has been anecdotally documented as a panacea addressing "increasing levels of student diversity" in public schools in the United States, a very important question remains: Is DI appropriate for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse who may also be learning English? More important, how does DI complement principles for teaching CLD learners? A matrix relating DI to CRT provides the beginning of a framework for this discussion (see Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Elements and Guidelines of DI (Tomlinson, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003)	Indicators of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2001)	Descriptive Characteristics of CRT (Gay, 2000)	Funds of Knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll et al., 1992)
Content Teacher: 1. Ensures that provision of access is central. 2. Clarifies key concepts and generalizations. 3. Adjustment to student diversity addressed. 4. Supports subject matter.	**Academic achievement** Teacher: 1. Presumes students capable. 2. Delineates achievement in classroom context. 3. Knows content, learner, and learners' style. 4. Supports curricular critical consciousness. 5. Encourages academic achievement (p. 74).	**CRT is empowering** Teacher encourages academic competence, personal competent, courage, and the will to act (p. 32). **CRT is transformative** Teacher recognizes existing strength and accomplishments of students and enhancing them further in the instructional process (p. 33).	1. Teachers **identify knowledge, skills, and practices** that enable modest income families to live their lives. 2. Teaching **learning process is improved**. 3. **Educational excellence** supported.
Process Teacher: 1. Emphasizes critical and creative thinking with appropriate management. 2. Provides flexible opportunities for students working together, engaging all learners. **Product** Teacher: 1. Adjusts expectations and requirements for students appropriately.	**Cultural competence** Teacher: 1. Understands culture and role of culture in education. 2. Takes responsibility for learning about students' culture and community. 3. Uses students' culture as basis for learning. 4. Promotes flexible use of students' local and global cultures (p. 97).	**CRT is validating** Teacher uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of CLD learners to make learning more relevant and effective (p. 29). **CRT is comprehensive** Teachers teaching the whole child (p. 30). **CRT is multidimensional** Teachers making use of encompassing curriculum, content, learning contexts, classroom climate, student	1. Teachers **enter students' homes as learners** conducting household interviews and observations. 2. Later **teachers reflect on the meaning** of their findings. 3. Teachers **collaborate to devise appropriate teaching** practices 4. **Relationships between students families and teachers are strengthened**

		teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments (p. 31).	
These concepts are not addressed in DI.	**Sociopolitical consciousness** Teacher: 1. Knows larger sociopolitical context (school, community, nation, world).	**CRT is emancipatory** Teacher lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truths typically taught in schools (p. 35).	1. Teachers **reexamine practices** in terms of their influence on student participation.
	2. Has investment in public good.		2. Teacher **commitments are reinforced**.
	3. Plans and implements academic experiences.		3. **Community knowledge is validated**.
	4. Believes students' success has consequences in teachers' life (p.120).		

Principles for teaching CLD learners and guidelines for implementing DI can balance one another to provide a realistic reconciliation of these best teaching practices to benefit a greater number of children. DI and CRT share common elements and are both considered emergent best research-based teaching practices. A closer look, however, shows distinctions between the two, suggesting that certain teaching strategies are preferred over others while simultaneously suggesting ways in which each approach can be improved by incorporating aspects of the other.

MINI-CASE STUDY

Purpose

For the past 5 years, in my own professional practice I have been fortunate to explore the interface between DI and pedagogy responsive to CLD learners. These explorations have taken place as a result of collaborative partnerships developed by my working as a faculty member at the local university with nearby elementary schools serving CLD learners. The partnerships I will describe are with two pre-K–5 schools in the same North San Diego County, California, school district, Bienvenidos Elementary and Xavier Elementary. These schools exemplify complementary best teaching practices employing DI, coupled with culturally responsive teaching. Schools were chosen as exemplars for this article because both schools are reaching high levels of academic achievement and are closing achievement gaps, dispelling the myth that high levels of poverty and/ or CLD student populations lead to lower student achievement.

Bienvenidos Elementary School

Bienvenidos is a small school with a total enrollment of 318 students. Many of the students are from socioeconomically disadvantaged households (47.3%), and 32.7% participate in free or reduced school lunch programs. Almost half (41.2%) of the students attending are Latino of Mexican descent, and 18.6% of the students enrolled are considered ELLs at varying levels of English language development (ELD). Other CLD learners include children of Asian/Pacific Islander (5.1%) and African American (4.7%) descent. Less than 10% (7.9%) of the student population identify themselves as Other. Since 2002, ELL and CLD learners have exceeded minimum annual yearly progress targets on state and national standardized assessments and have shown steady increase in grade-level proficiency, as have all other subgroups at the school.

As visiting faculty from the local university, I was invited to partner with the principal and teachers at Bienvenidos to respond to the special education needs of the school during the 2002–2003 school year. My work involved assisting the school by modeling and supporting DI practices "to provide equitable access to the core curriculum for a culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse student body" (Santamaría & Thousand, 2004, p. 13). In this capacity, I spent one day a week at the school for the entire school year.

Xavier Elementary School

With a total student enrollment of 499, Xavier is considered a neighborhood school. At this school, most students (68%) are socioeconomically disadvantaged. About half (53.7%) participate in free and reduced lunch programs. The vast majority (70.1%) of the students attending are Latino of Mexican descent, and almost half (43.3%) are considered ELLs at varying levels of ELD. Other CLD learners at the school include children of Asian/Pacific Islander (1.2%), African American (1.2%), and Other (5%) descent. Similar to Bienvenidos Elementary School, ELLs and CLD learners, since 2002, have exceeded minimum annual yearly progress targets on state and national standardized assessments and have shown a steady increase in grade-level proficiency, as have all other subgroups at the school.

My work at Xavier during the 2004–2006 school years was primarily to assist the principal, teachers, and community to transform the neighborhood school with declining enrollment into a district magnet school to attract families outside of the neighborhood. Our goals were to increase school diversity while maintaining the cultural, linguistic, and academic integrity of the campus. After researching magnet opportunities and conducting multiple district and community meetings, we opted to enter into the process and professional development toward becoming an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme school. We are currently in the application and review process, with growing interest and waiting lists for several grade levels. On average, I spent 4 hours a week at the site over two academic school years.

Data analysis

Observations, recorded conversations among teachers, administrators, students and parents, and supporting documents collected from both schools were initially coded by my reading through responses and documents. Using a qualitative analysis procedure, I generated codes identifying data relevant to general features of DI and CRT (Glesne, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I then proceeded with more focused coding wherein I reviewed previous codes, eliminated erroneous information, and then combined smaller codes into larger ones. Finally, I was able to organize codes into larger themes identified and grounded by DI and CRT literature (see Table 4).

Case study findings are presented in a matrix showing teaching examples that satisfy both DI and CRT simultaneously, and areas in which only one of the two methods was evidenced (see Table 4). This information is provided to elicit a discussion of the findings and provide school and university educators interested in the application and reconciliation of these two different teaching practices examples of what they might look like when brought together to serve many different types of learners.

Table 4: Classroom Evidence of Guidelines for Differentiated Instruction and Indicators of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Guidelines for DI and Indicators of CRT	**Academic achievement**	**Cultural competence**	**Sociopolitical consciousness**
Clarifying key concepts (content	Teachers develop culturally responsive thematic mini-units *delineating achievement in classroom contexts.* The units feature persuasive writing to prepare students to take upcoming district-created criterion-referenced writing assessment of five-paragraph essay	Teachers *demonstrate understanding of culture and the role of culture in education* in terms of having ELLs of Mexican descent think critically about and respond to declining numbers of Latino students who graduate from high school, and declining numbers of those who continue their education beyond high school.	Teachers have *investment in greater good,* evidenced by their intention to encourage students to reflect about the importance of higher education. The hope is that students would be more likely to "own" the idea of higher education having a positive impact on their lives and the teachers', rather than having the same information imposed on students on the teachers' terms.
Emphasizing critical and creative thinking (process)	Teacher *delineates achievement in classroom context* and *encourages academic achievement* by posting goals, objectives, and standards on the board or student desks using words or icons.	Teacher demonstrates *using student culture as a basis for learning,* with verbal praise for their ability to think and learn in two languages. Teacher *takes responsibility for learning about students' culture*	Teacher shows evidence of *planning and implementing academic experiences* by incorporating opportunities for students to work on higher order thinking tasks like analysis and application.

		and community when students are encouraged to share their families' seasonal celebrations.	
Engaging all learners (process)	Teacher inclusion of CLD assistants contributed to nonprejudiced attitudes within students and connected learning to their lives, thereby *supporting curricular critical consciousness.*	Teacher includes CLD class helpers, university students, and parents, *promoting flexible use of students' local and global cultures.*	Teacher demonstrates *knowledge of larger sociopolitical context* of students and *invests in public good* by providing students with opportunities to interact with CLD and people with different abilities than they have.
Balance between student- and teacher-selected tasks (process)	Teacher *assumes that ELLs in primary grades are capable* of discussing self-selected current events from the newspaper.	Teacher asks students, based on pictures, what they think news stories written in Spanish or English are about from their personal perspectives, *using students' culture as a basis for learning.*	Teacher praises depth of student questions and interest in Palestine bombings, implying *her belief that student success in global understanding has consequences in her own life.*
Using assessment as a teaching tool (product)	Teacher administers pretests and posttests as required by the district in the areas of reading, writing, and math.

With the exception of the five-paragraph essay featured in Clarifying Key Concepts, these assessments were not related to the curriculum and teaching described. | Teacher makes use of performance test data as baseline information for working with students. | Teacher knows that for students to become active participants in society, they must do well on assessments; uses data to inform her teaching; and teaches students test-taking strategies as part of her curriculum. |

Discussion

DI guidelines are used to frame the discussion. These include teachers (1) clarifying key concepts (e.g., content), (2) emphasizing critical and creative thinking (e.g., process), (3) engaging all learners (e.g., process), (4) maintaining balance between teacher-assigned and student-selected tasks (e.g., process), and (5) using assessment as a teaching tool (e.g., product). The guidelines are then cross referenced to indicators of CRT, including academic achievement (AA), cultural competence (CC), and sociopolitical consciousness (SC) as described by Ladson-Billings in her pedagogy for teaching diversity (2001). Some of the classroom examples that illustrate both DI and CRT are briefly described in the matrix (Table 4). Even though evidence of each DI characteristic was found in the data from both schools, alternating evidence collected is crafted to tell composite "stories" from the two sites featured.

Clarifying key concepts (content)

In what way do teachers support instructional subject matter, ensure access for all learners, align academic tasks, goals, and objectives to standardized tests, and scaffold content complexity for diverse learners? In this example gleaned from data collected at Bienvenidos Elementary School, student access to the core curriculum, goals, and objectives was achieved by teachers on the fifth-grade team in their teaching of persuasive writing through a five-paragraph essay. This mini-unit was developed to prepare students to take the upcoming district-created criterion-referenced writing assessment (AA). Teachers supported subject matter by providing an authentic model essay of the same topic by a previous fifth grader with similar cultural and linguistic traits as the students at Bienvenidos. The topic of the essay was culturally responsive to the experiences of the students in that the goal of the work was to persuade readers as to why education beyond high school is desirable, necessary, and attainable (AA). The topic was also culturally responsive in terms of having Latino ELLs of Mexican descent think critically about and respond to declining numbers of Latino students who graduate from high school and the dismal number of those who continue their education beyond high school (CC). It was the teachers' intention to encourage students to reflect and think on their own about the importance of higher education, with the hope that students would more likely "own" the information. By allowing students to grasp learning through their own cultural filter, the teachers were able to make a positive impact on their students' lives rather than simply transferring their own knowledge to the students (SC). Teachers began the weeklong project by encouraging students to generate ideas about what they already knew about persuading people, education beyond high school, and writing five-paragraph essays from their background knowledge and prior experience. Teachers provided scaffolds in the form of writing frames to support students' writing processes. At the end of the week, students were asked to document what they had learned from the exercise. As a follow-up to the lesson, students used their papers to inspire role-plays, acting as either the persuader or the individual being persuaded.

Throughout the project, work was differentiated for students in terms of level of ELD, learning disability, learning style, and other recognized academic diversity. Material was presented in written form, orally, and supported by a T-graph (for brainstorming), and written responses were supported by paragraph frames or sentence starters for students who needed the assistance. The teachers presented pertinent information several times as necessary and checked for understanding with frequent questioning and opportunity for students to orally process instruction in small groups before going on. Scaffolds of many kinds were made available to students during the week, including scaffolded materials, teacher modeling, opportunities for students to work with more proficient peers or classroom helpers, environmental print, and the opportunity for students at beginning ELD levels to work in their primary language as a scaffold to writing in English.

In other Bienvenidos classrooms and in relation to making important academic concepts clear, curriculum-relevant music was played throughout the day to purposefully assist students using DI in learning vocabulary, recognizing certain sounds, or learning new math content. Music was also used to motivate students to begin academic tasks.

Sometimes it was used to calm students or to cue them to transition from activity to activity or to line up for lunch, recess, or dismissal (CC).

Schoolwide at Bienvenidos, there was wide cultural and linguistic diversity in the selections of poems and stories that students read, further complementing each content area. Conversations in many classrooms operated on levels that served to clarify key concepts and generalizations encountered in student learning. Other DI guidelines evident in these observations included the use of assessment as a teaching tool in the teaching of new concepts based on individual student data gleaned from pretest results.

Emphasizing critical and creative thinking (process)

How do teachers use appropriate classroom management while students interact with one another on content regardless of ability level? Xavier Elementary School provided prime examples of ways in which teachers in all classrooms could be heard telling students how wonderful and intelligent they were based on individual students' strengths (Gay, 2000; King, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). They often did this by reminding students that as bilingual citizens, they were "twice as smart" as many other students in the world who may only be able to speak one language (CC).

Teachers at Xavier made it clear to their students that they expected each and every one of them to succeed. They did this by posting objectives, goals, and standards on the board using child-friendly language and icons for most activities (AA). The teachers also encouraged students to share their cultural experiences (i.e., different things that their families do, or not, to celebrate seasonal celebrations; CC).

The teachers also incorporated higher order thinking opportunities into all content areas, with emphasis on synthesis, creativity, and application for the young learners (SC). In one classroom, a teacher had a poster of Bloom's Taxonomy posted above her desk to remind her to differentiate her instructional practice and expectations for student products instead of reverting to more mundane and traditional displays of intelligence (e.g., recall, summary, description).

Throughout the observation, each teacher used flexible grouping and a variety of grouping strategies depending on content, projects, and evaluations, with the intent of addressing students' academic and affective complex thinking skills at the same time. For example, parts of math or language arts lessons were individualized but only after there had been significant whole- and small-group work to prepare students for independent work (CC). Learning experiences in these classrooms appeared to be fair for all learners. When academically based games were played and evaluations administered, they were based on group dynamics and previous student responses. Sometimes small groups of students worked at similar levels, but at other times, groups were heterogeneous. In one fifth-grade classroom, there were two students in the class with learning disabilities, but with careful modeling by the teacher, the potential for peer teasing was eliminated. There was little, if any, individual competition in the classrooms observed. Students learned very quickly that they could all be winners and experience success at some level in their

classrooms, even for the most academically challenged students. Even more important, student successes were celebrated daily (SC).

Engaging all learners (process)

How are positive interactions among students fostered and managed? One way that a Bienvenidos teacher accomplished this was by deliberately recruiting culturally and linguistically diverse student helpers, candidates, and parents for work in her classroom. These extended members of the classroom community communicated high academic expectations to students, potentially resulting in prejudice reduction for everyone involved in the class (AA). Having positive academic role models to relate to and identify with served to engage the students and maintain their motivation to learn (AA).

For example, in this second-grade classroom, Cherie was a student helper who was also biracial; her mother is White and her father is African American. Another student helper, Yesi, was an ELL of Mexican descent. Both of these fifth-grade girls, former students of the classroom teacher, have specific learning disabilities. Most parent helpers in the classroom were Spanish speakers of Mexican descent, and the two university student teachers were White. A high school student assistant working in the class, Hannah, was of Chinese descent.

Helpers were in the classroom at different times, but every day there was some assistance for the entire school year. These individuals assisted the teacher with teaching responsibilities and offered their support and affirmation to the children. Their inclusion in the classroom contributed to nonprejudiced attitudes within the children and helped students connect learning to their lives in child-friendly ways (CC). As a result, prejudice reduction took place all day long as students had opportunities to interact with peers and older helpers of different ethnic groups and special needs in positive ways. In addition, by designing educational materials to reflect students' individual differences, teachers enabled students to be exposed to positive images of themselves (SC; Gay, 2000).

Balance between student and teacher selected tasks (process)

In what ways do teachers balance what they want to teach with what students want to learn? An example of this balance was provided with a daily activity observed in a first-grade classroom at Xavier. Every day after lunch, students spent about 30 minutes looking through and discussing an English, Spanish, or bilingual newspaper that students brought from home (AA). The entire class gathered around as the teacher flipped through the paper and pointed out various current events, asking students predictive questions about the content based on the pictures embedded within individual stories. These opportunities introduced additional cultural and linguistic diversity to the children because stories surveyed involved people from different countries representing different cultures and languages (CC). One day, as students began to discuss the current events of the day, a story about a bombing in Palestine appeared. Based on the pictures, students asked questions such as, "Where is that [Palestine]? What is a bomb? And, why did 'they' use a bomb?" The teacher praised students' critical thinking skills and then

promptly responded by pulling out a globe, pointing out the country where the atrocity took place, and asking students for their definitions of a bomb. She clarified their definitions, which largely came from cartoons and the events around 9/11. The teacher then went on to the next story, providing a smooth transition into the next academic area of focus (SC). In other classrooms, teachers integrated thematic instruction to interrelate ideas and information within and across subject matter guided by the inquiry process. These processes were consistently framed by California language arts or mathematics standards.

Using assessment as a teaching tool (product)

How do teachers incorporate the use of testing as means to teach? The teachers at both schools are mandated by the district to administer pretests and posttests to their students. These district-created criterion-referenced tests are in reading, writing, and math content areas. Teachers use results from the pretests as baseline data not only to inform their DI teaching practices but also to glean information about their students' learning styles, language proficiency, and cultures. Even though assessment is not directly mentioned in the indicators of CRT (AA; CC), teachers at both sites felt that it was important for their students to know that assessments would be a normal part of the learning process. Consequently, teachers gave students a few minutes each day to practice test-taking skills (e.g., filling in bubbles, answering multiple-choice questions, developing and responding to rubrics; SC).

Additionally, many classrooms at the schools regularly established and communicated individual and group learning goals for all students. Goals could be found posted on whiteboards, taped to students' desks, or on PowerPoint slides and overhead transparencies. At both sites, teachers were observed collecting multiple sources of information to assess student learning. Many students were involved to some degree in assessing their own academic progress, even kindergarteners, by way of bar graphs. Finally, educators at both sites actively communicated with students and families about student progress. This communication often extended into the community at board meetings and occasionally at the university as teachers made presentations as part of their pursuits toward advanced degrees in various disciplines.

Case study summary

Using assessment as a teaching tool is the most important guideline for DI that is not explicitly addressed or developed in CRT. If CRT incorporated more evaluative indicators, the practice could be more practical for mainstream teachers in search of pedagogy to suit all learners. By the same token, guidelines for DI are not explicit in addressing practices that benefit ELLs and other CLD students. For educators interested in finding ways to meet the needs of ELL and CLD learners, they can look to this case study for some examples based on the central elements of DI instruction.

From this brief snapshot in which overall student achievement improved based on pre- and post-assessment data as evidenced by steady increases in grade-level proficiencies

over five years in all subgroups, it appears that DI and CRT can function as complementary teaching practices. In this mini-case study, I was able to find evidence of both DI and CRT in qualitative data samples. These preliminary findings indicate a strong case for DI and CRT to be considered as complementary teaching practices. Although the sample is small and case oriented, it does provide hope for reconciling these two best teaching practices that seem exclusive to each other upon first consideration. Furthermore, the literature supporting each practice begins to sound similar when indicators of each teaching practice are compared and cross-referenced.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Even after considering DI and CRT and having identified them in these composite classrooms at two schools, the question still remains: Is DI inclusive of, and thereby appropriate for, CLD learners? If educators are to take the theoretical and descriptive information provided herein, they can readily incorporate aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy to DI with confidence. By doing so, they can make content more accessible to students who are CLD, thus increasing students' opportunities to experience increased classroom success. DI can be appropriate for CLD learners when it is purposefully adjusted to respond to cultural and linguistic diversity in content, process, and product. If, though, educators practice elements and guidelines for DI by only acknowledging student differences without actually changing their practice (primarily because there are no guidelines on how to do so), teachers run the risk of practicing colorblind pedagogy. Although this type of instruction responds to academic diversity, it is exclusive and does not completely benefit children who are CLD. Providing authentic examples for ways in which to adjust DI so that it is increasingly culturally responsive will allow educators to develop and extend appropriate pedagogies to larger numbers of children with the most diverse needs. This approach is a fresh one and clearly suggests that teachers "take different paths to meet learners where they are" (Randi & Corno, 2005).

There are several lessons embedded in this consideration of two seemingly distinct teaching practices. The first is the obvious realization that both DI and CRT exist as a result of the needs of marginalized learners not being met in mainstream general education classrooms. The main difference is that DI provides guidelines addressing academic diversity, whereas CRT does the same for cultural and (sometimes) linguistic diversity. Another lesson to be learned is that DI complements CRT when attention is given to the needs of cultural and/or linguistic students, resulting in enhanced learning and student motivation. The third lesson to be learned is that teachers of ELLs and CLD learners need to learn more about special education processes so they are able to provide best teaching practices and support for diverse students (with DI as a pedagogical framework) without submitting them to special education labels and programs. Finally, all teachers need to learn how to distinguish between learning differences/problems and cultural/linguistic diversity to avoid confusing these issues when meeting the needs of all learners. Conversely, DI doesn't make students who benefit from the practice any more disabled than CRT makes students who benefit from it culturally and linguistically diverse. Educators need to minimize use of labels (and their resulting connotations) and practice sound research-based teaching to benefit the greatest number of students.

The most prominent gap in the literature is found in DI's willingness to acknowledge diversity but not in providing practical how-to pedagogy for teachers to follow. It is hoped that this article will serve to begin filling this gap with specific classroom examples. Another significant gap is found in CRTs literature and research addressing linguistic diversity. Although the case study was in settings serving large numbers of ELLs, there are still significant voids in ways in which CRT can better include teaching practices that respond to different levels of language acquisition. Further research is needed in both areas, with special emphasis on theory-to-practice approaches, to best reach and teach ELLs when teachers do not speak students' home languages.

In this article, I attempt to reconcile seemingly distinct teaching practices for ELLs, other culturally and linguistically diverse students, and academically diverse students in U.S. schools. In a closer look at the theories underlying CRT and DI, a comparison of the approaches reveals similarities and differences that shed light on the most appropriate teaching practices for CLD learners. Even though indicators for teaching CLD learners do not include information specific to using assessment as a teaching tool or mandated standardized testing guidelines, research suggests that attention to assessment is imperative to the success of CLD students in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamaguchi, 2000), including factors critical to school performance, such as motivation, perceptions, attitudes, and inclusion (Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp, 2003).

The best teaching practices are those that consider all learners in a classroom setting and pay close attention to differences inherent to academic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. Through a closer examination of two different, seemingly distinct theoretical models that have rarely been linked or reconciled, educators may be able to determine what is appropriate for particular groups of students in particular classrooms in particular locales. Further research on the application of these approaches in classrooms is needed to further substantiate assumptions made in this article. It is my hope that this work inspires educators to broaden their perspectives on DI, complemented by more relevant instruction appropriate for CLD learners. In implementing school reform efforts to improve student achievement, reconciliation of best teaching practices and the creation of hybrid pedagogies are critical in addressing a future of an increasingly diverse country and global community.

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